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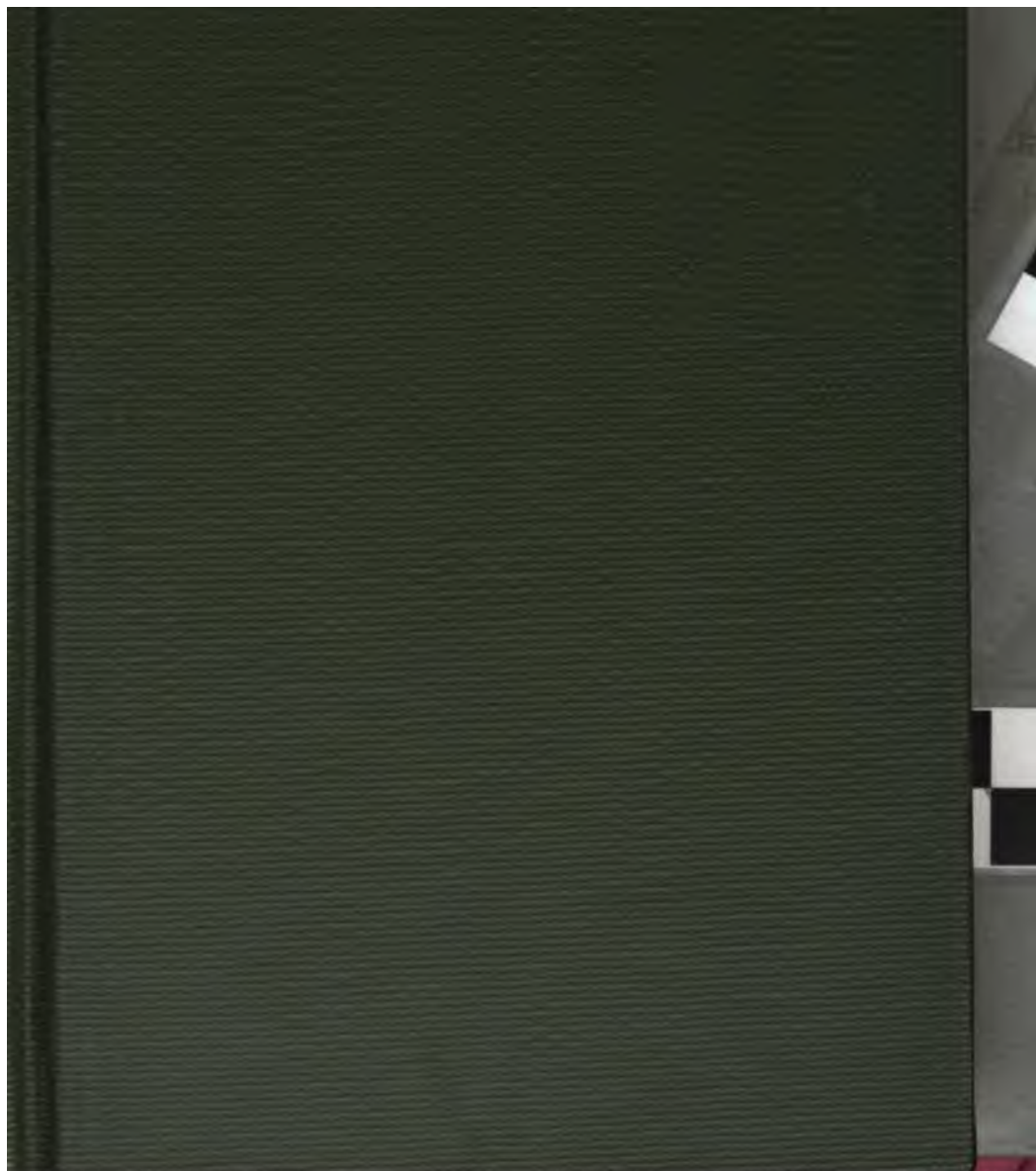
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**THE KEYS OF THE HOUSE**



**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**THE SCHOLAR OF BYGATE**

**A SECRET OF THE NORTH SEA**

# THE KEYS OF THE HOUSE

BY

ALGERNON GISSING

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# THE KEYS OF THE HOUSE

## CHAPTER I

### FROM HER SIDE

THE boy Yordas was five when his father removed to the secluded parsonage of Harthope. The change was the result of unfortunate domestic disturbances, which had come with tragical effect upon one of Mr. Brant's pious temperament not quite twelve months before. His wife, who was the chief actor in the incident, put the situation into these few words in a letter sent a day or two after her departure:—

“MY DEAR HUSBAND,—My choice seems to lie between crime and madness, and I have chosen crime. Since our talk in the study last night, you will not be surprised to hear that I shall not return. Thus to leave husband and child for what must appear to many a frivolous whim is, I know, the deepest crime; but I must bear the verdict since I cannot endure the strain. I believe you know that I have tried. After my last long illness I thought that I should win. I know now that I cannot. My life is not and can never be your life. It is less evil that I leave you to

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mould my own than that I remain a perpetual burden upon yours. I can say no more. Forgive me you cannot, but try to understand me. Our little Yordas must grow up on your life. That at least is firm and fixed, whilst mine is uncertain—a hope, an aspiration merely.—Unworthily yours, ELEANOR.”

It was this letter and the step which it announced that brought Mr. Brant's life at Norgill to an end.

Serious issues have, we know, frequently attended the most trivial causes, so that perhaps it is not too much to attribute the crisis at the parsonage wholly to a brief visit of Eleanor's brother Bertram to his moorland residence of Capple Rigg. It fell at a critical moment in the career of the parson and his wife, and besides, was itself invested with certain circumstances likely to affect deeply the temperament of the latter. It was in November and under the most densely clouded skies,—indeed, under those dismal conditions of late autumn in which for days together it is scarcely possible to see where earth terminates and sky begins, so ceaseless and impenetrable is the grey mist of rain that envelops the landscape. The outside world seems obliterated, and particularly in a remote and mountainous locality the need of inward resources becomes correspondingly increased.

Bertram had been nearly a week at Capple Rigg before communicating with his sister, and had been too profoundly engrossed in himself to give a thought to anybody differently situated.

For the time being his own resources were enough to exclude a much more determined antagonism than mere clouds and rain could bring against him. Indeed, it was with a glowing sense of gratification that he had from time to time looked from his study chair to the cheerless scene outside. It emphasised his



own content, his own exuberant triumph. But on Friday morning his thoughts could expand, and, as he put a light to his cigarette at the breakfast table, he resolved with a peculiarly complacent smile to send a note to Eleanor. It was really not inviting enough to turn out himself; besides, the parson would be at work—he heard that the child was not very well—in short, he did not feel at all inclined to face just then the domestic scene at the parsonage which his mind portrayed. But to spare Eleanor's feelings, in case she had heard of his arrival, he would at least despatch a note. This he went to his other room to write, and, to his supreme astonishment, scarcely an hour after he had sent it, Eleanor herself bounded into his arms, wet but fragrant from the rain.

"Well, what a boy you are!" she cried. "To be here a week and let me know nothing about it, whilst I!"—

"Whilst you? Nothing, I trust, more than usually alarming," he replied, with affectionate eyes on her. "I have heard that Yordas is troublesome, but I thought it would be only some childish ailment."

"Oh yes, yes, that is all right. But surely you at least can understand!" she said, withdrawing to the fire and then throwing her glance on him. "How well, how flourishing you look!" she added, in a tone of mixed resentment and reproach.

"I have occasion," smiled Bertram. "But take off your things. I will tell you. You can stay an hour?"

"An hour? I shall stay all day."

The young man shrugged his shoulders as he watched his sister go out into the hall.

"Ideal matrimony," he reflected, and drew forward two easy-chairs to the fire. In a minute or two Eleanor occupied one of them.



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A dignified, almost stately, woman she looked there, in the full flower of life and motherhood. She had thrown herself down into an unconstrained but graceful attitude of repose, and crossed her feet on the fender. Her eyes fixed themselves at once on the fire, and they as the centre of expressive features alone belied the calm posture she had assumed. Restless was too mild a word to apply to them. They glowed like the hot coals they reflected.

"I believe you were sent here by Providence," she said, just as Bertram was about to speak. "If your note had not come this morning I should have gone mad."

"But you've no business to get into such a condition," was his reply. "Why don't you go away for a change? You know that one word to me"—

"Half my married life has been spent in going for a change. It's not reasonable and it's no good. His goodness oppresses me. I simply cannot endure it."

"What on earth made him refuse that last offer at Bradford? It's impossible for him to meditate spending his life in an atmosphere such as this. He has surely a duty to you as well as to himself. He can't expect his friends"—

"But what have you got to tell?" interposed Eleanor abruptly, in an altered tone. And Bertram was able to throw off the distressing topic quite as readily. With a chuckle he jumped up and unlocked a drawer in his writing-table. The bundle he placed in his sister's hands consisted of the proof sheets of a work of fiction "by Bertram Arncliffe." Seeing her face he smiled. "At last," he observed. "I want your opinion upon it," he added complacently.

It was soon evident that the author had not overrated the power of his secret. The title-page alone acted upon Eleanor like magic. Her eyes certainly lost none of their brilliance, but their expression

changed. She shared his triumph, to the momentary forgetfulness even of her own distress. It was not necessary to add words to the look she gave him, so she silently continued dipping into the story whilst he talked.

"I finished correcting them last night. Now you will understand and forgive my seclusion. You will not wonder that I was really unaware of what the sky was like, but now it comes to me that I have not been able to see the distance of the vicarage since I arrived here. Ha, ha! Such conditions would, I suppose, once have affected me pretty much as they have evidently done you. But now—now they are—a necessary experience. One sees subtle meanings, unsuspected appearances, in such things. They form a wondrous background to the inexhaustible pageant of life. My dear girl, can't you see the— Yes, please, please!"

This sudden break in the novelist's disquisition was caused by Eleanor's having turned to the first chapter and begun to read aloud in a low, expressive voice the opening words of the story. She continued, and Bertram listened in rapturous content. Not even in first proof had his work seemed so impressively satisfactory as now from the sympathetic lips of his sister. The first chapter concluded, Eleanor paused and looked into the fire, then upwards.

"Will it do?" quietly asked the man. She only answered by lowering her eyes and going on with the reading.

An interval was allowed for luncheon, and again the task was resumed. In spite of her enthusiasm, Eleanor did not award blind praise. She criticised with a good deal of judgment, and Bertram confessed himself delighted with the frankness of her strictures. It was candour he wanted, whether he agreed with it or not. But with much that she said he did alto-

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gether agree, and spoke of what might be done "in subsequent editions" to improve various points of style and construction. So the afternoon hours crept on unheeded by both of them. The unsuspected and intensely congenial employment had no doubt proved of the utmost value to Eleanor in her highly nervous condition, since it had succeeded for the time being in sweeping from her mind all the trials of dismal skies, a wailing child, and a studious, self-contained husband. Old aspects and ideals of life, which had waned in her, started into renewed brilliance, and brought not only the sense of recovered youth but a resolute vigour which could only have belonged to her present years of maturity. Indeed, upon aspects and ideals she and her brother had lived as long as she could remember, and most of them were associated with the atmosphere of this patrimony of Capple Rigg, but none had attained to such reality as now.

This pair had come early into their inheritance. Half a century before, Capple Rigg had been a plain farmhouse like its neighbours, but the pastoral proprietor of that time had been a man of exceptional energy and ambition, who through successful dealings in wool had realised a fortune in the form of a factory in one of the rising manufacturing towns. It was he that enlarged the house to its present dimensions and gave to it its residential charm. Bertram and Eleanor had some years ago emerged from a period of guardianship to take possession of their estate, greatly diminished, however, by commercial disasters which had overtaken their father and caused his premature death. After being strictly brought up by the guardian who had taken them in charge, with a conscientious regard to the narrower limits of their inheritance, when they got command of their fortune its amount easily expanded to the widest desire of their mind. Much to his disgust, Bertram had been rigorously trained to

a commercial career, upon the old-fashioned lines of those who heroically forged their wealth by devotion to laborious days. He began by throwing this off. He was not unwilling to redouble his estate, but it must be done in a way consistent with the freedom of an imaginative mind. The old home had been prudently let during his minority. It was at once seen to be indispensable to the remodelled plan of life. Various economies could so easily be practised there; the position, and therefore prospects, of brother and sister became so desirably improved. It was here that the guardian had ceased all remonstrance and advice, and from that point the young aspirants had followed a wholly independent career.

When the tea came in and Eleanor was pouring it out, it was with certain aspects of this career that her mind became preternaturally active. She now talked with ceaseless vivacity, and without making reference to it Bertram saw with satisfaction the effect this visit had had upon his sister. He spoke warmly from the vague but glowing expanse of his imaginative horizon. So many things became possible, even imperative, now. He should, of course, renew the lease of his London chambers, which was expiring. He contemplated a cottage—literally a shepherd's or labourer's cottage, he said—in various parts of the country: the lake district, the north coast, Devonshire and Wales, for instance. "They would be valuable for you, old girl, as well as myself," he added affectionately. "We must really cope with your predicament." This was his first direct reference to that background in the mist, and it was just thrown in casually from the exuberance of his spirits and good-nature; but Eleanor made no direct answer to it. They had but half finished the book, only Eleanor had before said that she would return home after tea and take the second half with her. She did not now add anything

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to this. The almost abandoned frankness with which she had begun the day had been evidently much modified by her later experiences. Bertram instantly respected the reticence and said no more.

Eleanor bluntly forbade her brother to accompany her home. The distance was but a mile, and although such an overclouded sky permitted no twilight, the lady wished to traverse the dark, wet road alone. She tucked the precious bundle under her waterproof, and Bertram ushered her to the door. As he opened it, the ceaseless drip from the eaves and from every leafless twig upon an earth already sodden blended with the homeless wind that came sighing from the fells to send a wave of sadness over the threshold. Even Bertram felt it, and shuddered.

"Ugh!" ejaculated he.

"Good-night!" cried Eleanor from the bottom step.

"Nell!" he shouted, when he was about to shut the door, "I won't go to town to-morrow. Come and have another day."

"We'll see," came back in a clear, buoyant note, which had scarcely died away before the triumphant halloo of an owl came following it with a ludicrous effect of intentional mockery through the dark. In shutting the door Bertram did not hear it; but Eleanor stood still to listen to the last tremor of the second cry that she knew would follow. Then she went on. She was scarcely the person to be affected by any qualms of idle superstition in connection with so familiar a sound; but the call had, nevertheless, thrown her heart into a flutter which did not leave her for the rest of the walk. The exhilaration of middle day had left her as effectually as that small share of daylight had vanished from the November sky. It was now dark.

But if there is not exhilaration there may be

energy in darkness. Eleanor had not reverted to the morning's despair. Although the owls which were jubilant around her served only to recall the restless hours of wakefulness through which for many nights she had heard them, the association came to her mind with a difference. If her heart was palpitating, her step was even and firm. The limits of endurance were passed. She would now do something. She reached home, and entered the parsonage by the kitchen door.

Martha looked up from ironing. She was older than her mistress, and a Yorkshire woman. The whole place was as spotless as the linen outspread on the table, and a bright fire shed a radiant warmth through the room. What Martha meant to say was clearly expressed in her features, but she reverted to her work without giving utterance to her feelings. Nor did Eleanor speak. She took off her wet things and passed upstairs. Then Martha spoke, as she wiped the footmarks off the flagstones. After that the house was still again.

All was silent upstairs, and, after ascending noiselessly, Eleanor entered a bedroom which was made light enough by the fire. On a little bed a child lay sleeping, and she bowed down to look at it. It was the fair round face of a boy, flushed in colour, but angelic in repose. Eleanor knelt silently by the bedside, and for a long time seemed to give herself up to the contemplation of the child's features. It was a movement of his that disturbed her, and she abruptly left the room as noiselessly as she had entered. At the head of the stairs she paused, but only for a moment. That wail of the wind urged her forward, and she descended swiftly but still silently. She entered a doorway at the bottom, and closed the door after her. Rather too suddenly she found herself in all the quiet of her husband's study.

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The sombre skies had inspired the parson with a profound vein of contemplation, and he had been shut up in his study all the week without intermission, preparing a series of sermons on the prophets. A solemn calm pervaded his simple room of books, and the man himself was at that moment leaning on the table scribbling assiduously. The quiet and serenity of this atmosphere always smote Eleanor like a blow. It had never descended with a greater effect than now, and as she quietly took up a book at hazard and settled herself on a crimson buffet by the fire, the fresh colour which her walk through the rain had given her was changed to a deadly pallor. After finishing his sentence Mr. Brant got up, put his hand in his hair, and looked down at his wife's face.

"Why, darling," he said, "you are ill! What *is* the matter? This will never do."

Eleanor had been on the point of an impulsive confession of her case when his kind, blunt voice checked her. She was never a tearful woman, but just now she longed to prostrate herself and weep helplessly. This, however, she was able to restrain, but at the expense of all the courage and resolution that the atmosphere of Capple Rigg had given her. Here again in an instant she had found all the inarticulate despair of the morning, of day after day for ever so many mornings. The very tone of her husband's voice made her feel at once the impossibility of making him understand her difficulties. Any attempt to explain them seemed like a confession of her own worthlessness in face of his immovable strength and calm. She would have to put into words, into precise terms and expressions, the whole depth of her failure; a task of which she knew she was alone capable when met at least halfway. Every second's silence made it more difficult, more completely impossible to break the spell. At length the



moment came when she knew she should not attempt it. She seemed to throw all off with a sigh.

"Oh, if these awful skies would break I should be better," she cried. "They crush me to the earth."

Mr. Brant had expected more than this, and was disappointed. For the first time he had just got a glimpse of the profundity of his wife's agony, and he too was smitten dumb. They talked, it is true, long and earnestly, but neither could get to the inner recesses of their feelings. Acutely conscious of failure, Eleanor expressed bitter regret for disturbing him, and went away to lie down.

She tossed for some time in the darkness, and then rose with all the stealth of a criminal. The child had cried a little, but was again asleep. Martha still ironed in the kitchen as the mistress entered to get her outdoor things, which had been hung up to dry, but no word was exchanged between them. Without a sign of adieu to anyone Eleanor closed the door after her, and was once more in the rain. In a few minutes Mr. Brant came out of his study impetuously and spoke to Martha. Presently somebody brought a message to say that the mistress was going to stay the night with her brother at Capple Rigg, and as the wind wailed around the house, and the child began to cry, the parson divined the whole of the calamity. But he did not go out. On Monday morning the letter came, bearing the postmark of London.



## CHAPTER II

### FROM HIS

THE occurrence did not exactly surprise the parish, and the popular side was that of Martha, wholly in the parson's favour. The inhabitants of Norgill took a blunt, commonsense view of the matter; and as not the boldest of them had ever breathed a word of scandal against the lady's moral character, none could pretend to see what the woman wanted, still less what she deserved. The effect upon Mr. Brant, very soon visible, excited outspoken wrath, and when it became known that he found it necessary to seek a change of scene, indignation was heightened by the sense of personal grief and loss.

Those last months at Norgill were very painful ones, and none the less poignant because of its being a beautiful summer. The parson and his child, a radiant little fellow of much personal beauty and intelligence, were familiar figures those sunny days on the roads and hillsides with the bunches of flowers they had gathered or some moulting bird's feather in their caps. Martha frequently declared to her gossips with malicious satisfaction that the child had never once asked for his mother, but this was not true. Martha was not a person to utter a deliberate falsehood, so no doubt no inquiry had been put to her with reference to the missing parent; but of the

conversation that went on between Mr. Brant and the child she knew no more than a common outsider. The property in the parson which the housekeeper's attitude had long taken for granted, had no place in her direct intercourse with the man himself. The worth and fidelity of Martha were well known to Mr. Brant and fully conceded, but, like the rest of the world, she very well knew where liberty with him had its limit. However, she ventured to receive his intimation of an approaching removal with a proper display of self-importance, knowing that hers was the first ear in the parish to greet the announcement. She fully agreed with her master that it was the best thing to be done under the circumstances, and that, for her part, seeing what had happened in Norgill, she shouldn't mind how soon she shook the very dust of the place off her feet for good. She could be ready any day to go wherever he wanted.

This was Mr. Brant's way of getting to know whether Martha was willing to throw in her lot with him, and, being a man of habit, the decision which she volunteered removed a good deal of disquiet from his mind. He forthwith entered into full details with her. He had explained his situation to the bishop, he said, and the prelate had once more considered his case with paternal sympathy and kindness. In accordance with the parson's resolutely determined wishes, his lordship had been able to present him with another benefice of rather smaller stipend than the present one, but of the same pastoral kind, and in locality still more remote, namely, amidst the hills of the Northumberland border; "but since a handful of God's people have to live and die there," added Mr. Brant, "there is infinite scope for the highest talents that any poor mortal can lay claim to." So the Norgill chapter came to an end, and after a series of agitating farewells the simple flock

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woke up one morning to the fact that they no longer had Mr. Brant. That day the fells enclosing their valley looked down on them with an unwonted frown.

But they could give voice to their grievance, whilst the desolate pastor had to keep his trouble to himself. In contemplating the situation, however, he felt himself compelled to find some form of utterance, and the only way open to him was with the pen. So after he had got his new home into order, no difficult task to one of such primitive tastes, Mr. Brant isolated himself entirely for a few days, repelling even the advances of the little boy. He wrote and re-wrote, copied and burned, but by the first Saturday he had the following confession written out in a hand that satisfied him, and Yordas found to his delight that he had captured his father again, and so entered with glee into the new life.

“STATEMENT for my son Yordas, when he is of age, or so soon as circumstances shall require elucidation.

“I sought ordination at Durham, and so encountered the eye of the bishop there. Something more than the usual formal meeting resulted. The bishop was interested, I was impressed. It was this that enabled me to terminate so immediately my year of curacy which was passed in a colliery settlement.

“‘Try it a year,’ his lordship had said in wishing me God-speed as a novice. ‘If not successful, come back to me.’

“It was not successful. For industrial life I was not at all suited. So I went back after the expiration of the time appointed. Rather, I at first wrote a long letter to the bishop, endeavouring to explain my views, and in two days received a few private words with an invitation to breakfast with him—‘alone,

of course,' as he so kindly and characteristically added—at a certain time on a day appointed. I punctually attended, and the interview was in every way as conclusive and satisfactory as before.

"Indeed, it was naturally very much more conclusive, for under the skilful and sympathetic handling of such a bishop, I expanded as I had never been able or inclined to expand before. After a long, wearying pupilage of total misunderstanding, I saw instantly that here I was understood, and my hopes revived. I could express emotions which had been vague even to myself before. Fragmentary impulses of youth combined into a wave of impassioned purpose and resolve. The bishop listened with the closest attention, and with that—yes, I deliberately say it—that Christ-like smile to what he called my 'torrent of primitive force.'

"'I think you are right,' he concluded. 'This is what we want for the hills. You shall try Norgill.'

"That same day I journeyed to Norgill to inspect the vacant benefice in the Yorkshire mountains to which the bishop had the right of presentation, and I came to an immediate determination to accept it. In a short time I was installed. Being at that time twenty-seven, and for the first moment in my life upon a field of independent action, it was here that my individual life actually began.

"The living was remote and valued at ninety-two pounds a year. The grey-towered church stands in the midst of a cluster of grey and white-washed cottages, and from the windows of my parsonage was obtained an unbroken view of the long green basin in the hills of which my parish was composed. It was October when I went there, and, as if to celebrate my advent, the rains ceased on the very day of my arrival, and there followed almost a month of that benign glory which so frequently

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irradiates the soft and golden days of the declining year. But although I trust my piety was too sincere to turn such a natural display to any personal account, I did not fail to draw suitable inspiration from the gorgeous spectacle. I look back to it now with a sense of wonder and of awe. Acting upon the stimulus which a congenial change in life had given me, my soul was raised to a pitch of fervour which swept over the secluded parish like a magic wand. It educated myself, however, more effectively, I suspect, than it did my parishioners. For the first month I lived in such an emotional glow as to be lifted beyond the more humble ministrations of my office. I could not face my people individually. I was compelled to live very much alone. I knew that, merely as a matter of duty, this spell must be broken, but I shrank from bursting through the magic ring. At length it was accomplished by outside aid.

"On the night of my fourth Sunday, I noticed that a pew in which I had taken especial interest was empty for the first time. The explanation awaited me at home in the form of a note from Capple Rigg signed 'Eleanor Arncliffe.' It was written in pencil, stated that the writer's brother had whilst riding that afternoon received a serious fall, and begged that I would take pity on his solitude so long as the confinement should last. After a few minutes' hesitation, I decided to go up to Capple Rigg that night.

"This was a substantial grey house raised on the hillside where the last green field gave place to the open moor. Its inhabitants were my only parishioners above the quality of yeomen, and although they had shown an immediate anxiety to extend to me a cordial hospitality, even they had found it impossible to break down my enthusiastic reserve. I have often thought, therefore, with what astonishment my name

must have been received there at that hour of the night.

"As I entered the hall, strains of solemn music fell upon my ears. Ignorant of all such except the simplest melodies, it impressed me deeply. From the room in which I stood, I heard another door opened and the music cease. Then followed the exclamation of unfeigned surprise, 'Mr. Brant!' The words still vibrate in my memory. Unaccountably they thrilled me then; they thrill me now. In a moment, scarcely announced by her approaching footstep, a young lady greeted me with warmth. 'How very good of you, Mr. Brant!' she said. 'The doctor thinks it even worse than we had feared.'

"I stayed for half an hour, and then found myself again alone in the dark.

"So far, that is, as I was ever again to be alone. I did not go straight home. Although there was no moon, it was a fine night with starlit spaces amidst wondrous clouds, and I found the quiet favourable to reflection. The fervour of the day's exertions (as I thus explained it) was still upon me, and caused much of the effect of the visit which I had just made. Everything about me was transcendent. I walked in an ideal world. After wandering for an hour I returned to the parsonage, and sat up throughout the night writing advance sermons at feverish speed.

"For more than a month Bertram Arncliffe was ill, and for two or three weeks longer partially confined to his house. I was at Capple Rigg frequently throughout the time. I no longer found it necessary to seclude myself in order to keep unimpaired my pious fervour. My life seemed to have been raised to a higher plane by this first intimacy with a refined but congenial hearth. Love of isolation actually deserted me. I indulged in the various social engagements to which Capple Rigg introduced me, and I caught

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glimpses of the beauty, of what I then deemed the real power, of the world, vaunting in the discovery of unknown forces in myself which that dazzling world revealed. My whole nature was ablaze—spiritual as well as intellectual—and blindly I gloried in it. But one snowy night in January, after a long drive home from another dale, I stood upon the parsonage steps to listen to the muffled wheels that bore my companions on to Capple Rigg. A spectral cloud moved like an eyelid from the moon, and I looked up at it. Then without any conscious premeditation, I exclaimed, 'But this is love, human love.' And I presently added, 'If so, it also is a divine and glorious thing.' With that I crossed the threshold into my dark and quiet house.

"But from that day I was under no delusion. I knew that I loved irrevocably, also that I might never confess my love. So I had naturally to change my behaviour. This was detected by my friends at Capple Rigg, and one evening Bertram jocularly taxed me with it. I at once admitted that I found it necessary to curtail my worldly enjoyments, and the subject was turned aside.

"Eleanor made no remark at that particular time, but the topic had not escaped her. A Sunday or two after, on coming out of church, I walked a little way in the sunshine with her and her brother, and she turned to this subject. To my discomfort, on nearly every meeting afterwards, Eleanor evinced frank anxiety to discuss it, for her whole construction of me was based upon the supposition that I believed social enjoyment to be a crime. To my plea that it was simply a matter of personal duty and claims, she found innumerable replies. So I had to stay more and more at home, for beautiful as was her transparent artlessness, it transfixed me with steel.

"How a fuller understanding of my position came

to her apprehension I only learned from her own lips later. It originated, she told me, in another of Bertram's jocular remarks.

"'What *is* the matter with Mr. Brant?' she asked him one day after I had gone. 'He is quite changed.'

"'He's in love,' said Bertram, laughing.

"'With whom?'

"'Most likely with you.'

"That remark, thoughtlessly and playfully uttered, sealed our fate.

"But at first it freed me from most of my difficulties by totally changing Eleanor's behaviour to myself. Ignorant of the cause, I thought her attitude to me to be one of serious displeasure, and I was thankful for the relief. Could I but have heard of her prospective marriage I could have rejoiced, but two years elapsed without the slightest indication of such a course. Now I see that it was I who ought to have married, or, failing that, to have resigned my cure. I did neither, and meanwhile endless debates arose within myself. Frequent meetings between me and my friends at Capple Rigg were inevitable. I could not now but suspect that Eleanor's own affections were touched. Even she refrained from much of her social enjoyment. What if we two were actually in love? The question again and again arose, to be again and again vehemently disposed of. I *saw* what was her tendency of life; in sane moments I knew what had always been mine. But then again some fervid exposition of love encountered in my reading swept all worldly distinctions from my mind. I never feared my power of making her personally happy, but it is my duty amply to confess that I was irrevocably assured of my inability to supply her with the kind of life which I knew she would in time require. It was easy for me by then to see that my



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own excursions into polite and artificial society had been but my own unconscious love of her. In refined life I was in her life. She was refined life, the first I had ever known, and my ideal conception of it was but my passionate homage to her. I was perfectly convinced that with the daily possession of her my every need would be satisfied—that, in fact, it would be irksome, impossible, for me longer to frequent artificial life at all. In this knowledge, of course, lay my guilt. Although she also, I am convinced, was at that time sustained exclusively by the loftiest conception of love, there must necessarily have been the consolation of social hopes from my profession. That I had ability not exactly common I knew, and had indeed been assured of it by numbers, from the good bishop downwards. In it lay the certainty of promotion. Of this she must in the very nature of things have thought. I alone knew that it was a delusion. For me even then, how much more since this tragic confirmation, professional ambition did not exist. Nay more, I know that from the mere thought of it I recoiled. In concentration and not expansion, not only my strength but my very life lay. In what the world calls poverty I alone could live. And at the proper time I confessed all this to Eleanor. But, alas! she was in love, and how easily such worldly vapours faded from between us. My thoughts seemed but a reflection upon her sincerity, and she nobly hurled them from her soul. I was vanquished. Love was enough, so we loved. At the end of that second year we were married.

“Marriage confirmed in both of us our deepest nature. Of the sublimity of such a state it does not here befit me to speak. For two years it continued undimmed. Our child was born, and we agreed to give him the uncommon name of Yordas in recognition of a wondrous September day spent by us on a hill-

side, in my old parish of Norgill, called Yordas How. It was an especially critical and memorable day, insomuch as our meeting there was accidental, and it was then that we first fully opened our hearts and swept from them the mists that had so long been parting us. It is strange how frequently critical points in my life have, so to speak, harmonised with the face of God's nature at the time. This day was a notable instance of what I mean. That morning I had awakened to the first white autumn mist, hill and valley obliterated by a thick veil of finest lawn, the texture of whose drapery only became visible as its folds were drawn from the hill-creases by the advancing sun. I had to go and see a poor old invalid in a lonely house on Yordas How, and by the time I got there it had become a sunny but hazy day with tresses of filmy cloud across the sky. In mounting the slope I saw that all the hillside was corded with gleaming gossamer. As I came out of the cottage my eyes fell in consternation upon a female figure on horseback advancing to where I was. But she was leaning forward, and I knew that she would be looking down to see the horse's legs snapping the silken threads as he waded the knee-deep bracken. She did not look up until within twenty yards of where I stood. She coloured deeply, but, whatever might have appeared, I knew the keen delicacy of her soul and saw the sincerity of her alarm. Yet I could not leave her. Those gossamer threads became chains of iron to bind me to her presence. That day, as I have said, our hearts dispersed the mists in which they had been enshrouded as completely as the sun's rays had cleared the surrounding hills.

"I have but little more to say. In the development of our several natures we drifted several ways. Could I but have modified my own soul in ever so moderate a degree, I know that we could have been

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spared what afterwards befell us. But in this matter God interposed, and not even for the happiness of her who was so much to me could I swerve from what my soul approved. I knew by then that I *had* swerved, and passionately craved that I might alone bear the penalty; but this of course could never be. Through me, Eleanor too must suffer. I knew emphatically—and for ever I thank God for it as for His greatest blessing to me—that at this crisis I did not for an instant waver. In her efforts to gain the elegant existence which her intellect so imperatively demanded, to develop in worldly sunshine the talents and faculties of which she felt possessed, my dear wife procured me offer after offer of good preferment until she at last despaired. I was immovable. The bonds of simplicity and isolation oppressed her. Her spirit broke. She became ill. She made long visits to her friends in polite life. God knows that I too suffered, for all her efforts could not be hid from me. At length the end came.

“It was just before Martinmas, when our boy Yordas was five. A wind blew round the parsonage with that peculiar sob characteristic of the south-east. It had so blown unrestingly for a week, varied only in tone by the changes of sky from a grey veil of rain to the drift of sombre cloud that hung in spectral clumps about the mountains. These conditions always inspired me with solemn thought, and for the greater part of the week I had been in my study. This room was free to my wife at all times to enter, but she had been there only once that week. On this particular night she came in noiselessly and crouched by the fire with a book. In a moment I got up and we talked. Her pale agony distressed me. I never before knew what she had suffered, for it was not easy for me then to realise exactly her attitude of mind. But here I saw the acutest suffering before me,

in the form that I most tenderly loved. I endeavoured to soothe her, but in vain. Naturally my tenderness did but add to her affliction. After a harrowing conversation she said she would go and lie down. I understood afterwards that much of her anguish must have been the result of her inability to disclose to me the step which she had decided upon as inevitable. But the way in which it fell out was indeed the only way.

"After the interruption I stood with my dry pen motionless between my fingers, my eyes fixed as immovably on the fire. The wind kept up its dismal moan outside. Now and then a handful of rain was dashed against the window. It was one of these that took me to my chair again, and I endeavoured to resume the subject I was contemplating before. Suddenly I looked up and, standing where she had stood during our recent conversation, I again saw the figure of my wife. With a glance at the wan features, a wave of passionate emotion swept over me, and dropping my pen I stepped towards her.

"My darling, let us bury the world!' I began vehemently. 'What shall it profit you or me'—

"But I stopped, for I was staring at vacancy. The whole vision was illusory; no figure of my wife was there. I stepped quietly into the passage. The child was crying upstairs, the dim light of a candle coming down the staircase. I went up. The boy was crying in solitude. I hurried to the kitchen. The dull thud of Martha ironing at the table, the heater moving audibly in the box, alone broke the quiet.

"Martha, where's your mistress?"

"Nay, I cannot tell,' she said. 'She was making to go out a few minutes sin'."

"But it is dark and wet. She can't have gone out. She left me scarce half an hour ago."

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“‘There’s no reckoning her fancies,’ said Martha, who ironed on without looking up.

“As I reached my study there came a knock at the house door, and a boy left the message that Eleanor had gone to Capple Rigg. But an instant before I had surmised all that had happened. I have not seen my wife since then.

“This, then, is all my story. I soon found that, with the most resolute intentions, continued life at Norgill would be a thing beyond my strength. So more, far more, than reluctantly I again brought myself before the bishop, with the result that once again he was able to hear me, and I in due course removed to this still more secluded benefice in the borderland still farther north. Perhaps one word is necessary as to the assurance I was compelled to require that our separation should be complete. I have often thought that to others it must have appeared unnecessarily harsh and inhuman. It was the result of my own weakness alone. A partial, inconsistent, disjointed life— But no, I will say nothing. Thou alone, O God, canst know the heart! Search us, forgive us—O Father, sustain us to the end! In Thy hands alone is the issue.

“Written, I trust, in all humility, contrition, and sincerity, during the first week of my settlement at Harthope. 24th October 18—.

“ANTHONY BRANT.”

## CHAPTER III

### HARTHOPE

WITH that frank and lucid statement Mr. Brant seemed to write off, as it were, a whole section of his existence. He put the document away safely, and fronted his new career with resolute and pious fervour.

The district to which he had come consisted wholly of bare round hills, irregularly parted by steep and narrow clefts, through which descended stony rivulets or burns springing high up on the mountains and all finding their way down into a little central river called the Harthope Water, near the head of which Mr. Brant's isolated church and parsonage were built. This stream again was but a tributary of a larger river which, as it got free from the hills below the nearest village, called Shilmerton, threaded the woods, green haughs, and cultivated lands to the sea. The remote incumbency, though called a vicarage, was technically a perpetual curacy, which some three hundred years before had been carved by a pious bishop out of the territories of the indeterminate parish of Shilmerton, and endowed by him, with a view of bringing the influence of a resident priest to bear upon the habits of a scant, unsettled, and then peculiarly lawless population.

If tradition could be trusted, the devout intention of the founder had not been invariably respected by

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those who had enjoyed the endowment of his upland benefice. To such of them as were merely men, even from earliest days, the locality seems to have presented temptations of its own. Certain of these will be familiar to students of out-of-the-way poetry, as they soon were to Mr. Brant, through the spirited old verses known as "The Fat-heded Preste of Harthoopes." Others lingered in fireside gossip as well as in local nomenclature, such as the shepherds' name of the Priest's Cleugh for a rugged nook in the hills above the church in which, upon the same authority, an illicit still had been secreted wherefrom a convivial vicar of Harthope supplemented his stipend and enlarged his powers of hospitality by dispensing contraband whisky to his trustworthy parishioners and friends.

It was in investigating the lore that had gathered round these vanished apostolic predecessors of his that Mr. Brant found his principal diversion of the first few weeks. He trudged about the hills, imbibing the spirit of the district, and establishing genial intercourse with all the scattered dwellers in his parish, whether nominally members of his church or not. The simplicity of his demeanour at once recommended him to all alike, and, with a few inevitable reservations, even the complexion of his theology was soon found to be beyond the range of censure. Abram Gourlock, the shepherd of Redburnshank and a staunch member of the orthodox flock, was immediately satisfied, and proclaimed far and wide that "the man wa'd do." Mr. Brant had only one momentary disturbance in this promising commencement. It occurred in November, about a month after his arrival at Harthope, and on the first anniversary of his wife's abrupt departure from Norgill. With Gourlock's advice and assistance the parson had bought his first flock of sheep, and that day the two men were driving



them home to Harthope from an adjoining dale. It was a day of autumn sunshine, and under the clear blue sky the hillsides took a beautiful shade of brown from the russet leaves of the dead bracken which was mingled with the grass. Mr. Brant had been thoughtful and preoccupied through the greater part of their journey, but as his valley opened in front of him he paused to look at it, and made a reflective observation to his companion about the scene.

"Ay, Mr. Brant, it's a bonnie watter," was the reply. "It's a bit off the road, ye ken, but it's tarr'ble strange what yen can get used to. I whiles say to my wife Bella— But who's yon?" And Abram shaded his eyes in silence.

At the same moment Mr. Brant also had noticed the figure in the distance to which Gourlock had referred, and felt a shock from it. It was somebody on horseback, riding evidently in the direction of the parsonage, as Abram at once remarked, and from a presentiment which took hold of Mr. Brant it was with no surprise that he found Yordas in conversation with his uncle Bertram on arriving at the house.

The meeting of the two men was quite free from restraint. Bertram was in faultless riding attire, and looked so radiant and healthy that he made the parson appear shabby and careworn in contrast. But Mr. Brant was always invested with a dignified composure that inspired respect and generally a little awe. From his imaginative eminence, however, Arncliffe always extended a little kindly patronage to the good parson, and there were traces of this natural superiority in his bearing now. It sat so gracefully upon him, though, and was the outcome of such transparent good-nature, that it would have required a much smaller man than the present object of it to be conscious of offence. But as Mr. Brant knew that the unexpected visit would be no idle or impertinent one, he did not waste



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time in needless commonplace. The two together stabled the horse, and whilst dinner was preparing they took a little walk by the burnside to broach the matter that was on both their minds.

Near the end of that written fragment of his past history the parson had referred to the assurance he was compelled to require, that the separation of himself and his wife should be complete. Eleanor's brother was one of those to whom it had "appeared unnecessarily harsh and inhuman," and in view of Mr. Brant's well-known disposition it was a stipulation which Bertram did not quite understand. Now that the year was up, it was this point which he had come to discuss, and he at once confessed it.

"I expected that," said the parson calmly, "but it is irrevocable. You must see that there is no other course."

"That is precisely what I do not see."

"But I am sure Eleanor must."

Bertram's silence appeared to intimate that she did.

"Do not think that I misinterpret the kindness of your intention," the parson went on. "Your wish is natural and inevitable. But if you think there is any middle course, Bertram, you do not know either of us. But leave us both out of the question and take your stand upon Yordas. There is a human life for which I primarily am responsible. Through my action that life may be wrecked or established. Do you think I can entertain anything else whatever in comparison? Deplorable blunders one makes, but my duty in that direction is clear. Life must offer one clear and undivided current to him until he is old enough to make a responsible selection. That current is naturally contained within his father's house, and I know both Eleanor and yourself well enough to be fully persuaded that you will conscientiously and unreservedly accept my stipulation. Half of my income

I shall continue to remit to my wife whether she wishes to use it or not. In my heart, of course, I can admit of no division. Eleanor knows that so long as I have a roof over me there is a home and tender reception awaiting her, but intercourse at a distance or in two divergent and inconsistent courses of life is impossible."

"Then it is final, and I will say no more."

They walked back, and after dinner Bertram took a rather solemn but quite amicable farewell. Henceforth their paths in life were to be widely separated.

## CHAPTER IV

### BY THE WAY

AS a matter of fact, Eleanor knew nothing of this mission, undertaken out of pure benevolence by her brother. He had launched into it impulsively in connection with a journey he was making to the north coast, and from his fruitless visit to the parsonage he rode away down the valley in light and varied contemplation, until the early sunset caused him to look out for an inn by the way.

Bertram had not leapt into opulence and fame quite as readily as he had expected on reading his first proof sheets twelve months ago, but he still foresaw a haven in this or that form of literary enterprise, and busied himself with what he called "material" for imaginative ventures of different kinds. He was rather of Dr. Johnson's opinion that the arm-chair of an inn was the supreme throne of human felicity, and not even in the radiance of his club did he expand so luxuriantly as in the parlour of some out-of-the-way hostelry, with a group of unsophisticated country people for encouragement. On this particular evening he fell in with exceptionally congenial quarters. There had been the annual shepherd's show that day in the place he had arrived at, and the activity it had occasioned was still clinging about the inn. So he partook of the supper he was in need of in company with several others similarly situated, and any uneasy

reflections which the November twilight may have been giving rise to, were quickly lost in the entertaining discussions of the pastoral assembly. All the company, however, had homes to reach at a greater or less distance, and so, in due course, had to depart; but there was one who, like Bertram, had to sleep there for the night, and as it chanced to be a young man in whom the novelist had felt a particular interest, his own entertainment was not at an end. In the subsequent conversation they had together, Arncliffe found that his companion had come from a little fishing village on the coast and that he was named Gideon Thew, by trade a wheelwright. He was a man of strong intelligence, and the way in which he responded to Bertram's inquiries about the local life displayed faculties of independent observation that even an aspirant to letters could envy. Arncliffe was so delighted with his new acquaintance, and with the glimpses of fresh scenes which the latter's conversation afforded, that he let the meeting decide his own course, and the next morning he set off with the wheelwright to his destination at a hiring fair towards the sea.

On these professional wanderings Mr. Arncliffe always assumed a fictitious name, finding that this system of incognito gave him more readiness and wit for whatever might befall. He was therefore on this occasion Mr. Bernard Holt. Ever since leaving Mr. Brant at Harthope his mind had been preternaturally active, and, in the conviction that he had at last lighted upon something exceptionally good in the way of plot, the man of letters continued in a most vigorous and versatile mood. He fascinated all with whom he came in contact by his colloquial and imaginative charm. On reaching their destination by the coast, Mr. Holt took up his quarters at the inn, with the intention of passing a week

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or two there, and for several days everything went well.

Indeed, to all except the intelligent wheelwright, who had attracted the author to the spot, there was still no apparent change. But one evening the young artisan found cause for alarm. It had not previously occurred to him that one of the main objects of the literary man's life is the interpretation of the female type. For another purpose he happened himself to be interested in the same direction, and suddenly he found these two quite independent pursuits meet at a point. He hurried down to the inn in anxious suspicion. Mr. Holt had gone out. Thew went on to a fisherman's cottage. Zillah also was taking advantage of the moonlight. The visitor seemed stricken, and the woman inside noticed the change.

"What's wrong, Gideon?" cried she, not very sympathetically. "A lass has enough to do to keep step with you, I reckon." But the mother told the neighbours afterwards that she was sorry she had said it. Gideon turned away and went down to the sands. It was a brilliant moonlight night, and the waves sparkled in silver whiteness as they broke along the strand. All seemed calm enough, but the young man's heart thundered in stormy agitation. He went along to where Zillah's brother kept his boat. It was away, although he knew that George was in the village. Gideon was a shy, self-contained man, and dreaded any exposure of his suspicions to blunter neighbours. So to and fro he paced, looking constantly and listening out to sea. At last he went again to the inn. No, Mr. Holt had not returned. Perhaps he would be away for the night, said they; he had done so once or twice. Gideon walked silently to the beach. He drew again towards Zillah's cottage, but the mother's blunt tongue checked him. He dared not go in. In turning away he noticed that the moon



was now all bleared and the heavier sigh of a changing wind came over the sea. The tide was on the turn and the waves were louder. Again he crept to that place on the beach. The boat was not there yet. The sound of a cottage clock striking came to him on the breeze. It was ten, the hour at which he always left Zillah at home when they had been for a ramble. He could endure it no more, so sped straight to her cottage.

"Here they are!" cried the voice of George as the door opened.

"No, they aren't," was Gideon's answer, in a strange tone.

"What have you done with the lass?" exclaimed the mother.

Thew, with funereal calm, announced that he had done nothing, had not seen the girl since last he came for her. "And the boat's away," he added.

"Away?" bawled George. "Then she's done it."

"Done what?" Gideon was colourless and breathless, his lips apart.

"Taken yon man out in the moonlight."

"What man?"

George looked at Gideon in astonishment.

"Yon writing chap you brought along with you."

They all saw Gideon shudder.

It was soon known how jocularly it had been begun, but no face now smiled at it. The wind was moaning, the waves tumbling on the beach. But her brother George alone refused to distrust Zillah. She could handle a boat as well as any of them. Mad as the freak was, nobody had hinted at anything but bodily danger. All knew Zillah; all trusted the genial Holt. They would be a bit frightened, but there was no cause for real alarm. By midnight, however, more shared the opinion of Gideon Thew.

He had soon escaped from the cottage to bear his

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agony alone and in the wind. To and fro he flitted like an uneasy spirit, turning convulsively away whenever he came into proximity with forms or voices. Every blast whistled through his heart-strings, every billow thundered on his soul. He was never a sanguine man; to-night all hope merged in one deep knell. In the morning nobody jeered at him. His worst fears were justified.

On the sandy beach of a little secluded haven, round the point, Gideon found what had for hours been the only object, the only hope, of his search. He was alone, and for this one mercy he uttered a cry of heart-broken but pious thanks. The figure of Zillah lay there where the tide had left it, a great coil of olive-green seaweed wound fantastically about her head and shoulders, an adornment which gave to the still features the expression of a wild, triumphant laugh. When Gideon had overcome his first anguish he unwound the seaweed and went away with it to tell of his discovery. The boat also had been found, but of the unfortunate novelist there was no trace. Mr. Bernard Holt had been swallowed by the waves, and sought for the materials of romantic fiction in this district no more.

But the fate of Mr. Bertram Arncliffe was somewhat less tragical. Although by no means heroically fashioned, the literary aspirant was neither criminal nor depraved. Had his design been such, mere shrewdness would have saved him from supposing the radiant Zillah a suitable victim of his schemes. His worst fault on this occasion was a gross deficiency of moral courage. The adventure had proved irresistible, and when wind and wave and current so unexpectedly put him and his bold companion into peril he had exerted to the utmost a chivalrous, if inexperienced, strength. It was in the midst of such exertion, after being blinded by a billow which broke

upon the boat, that, to his horror, Arncliffe found himself alone. When he actually realised the hideous, the spectral, discovery, he sent forth an agonising, soul-deep shout across the deep, which was lost in the turbulent mockery around, and the man knew that Zillah was lost. Reckless and self-abandoned, he flung away the oars; and so, through no effort of his own, drifted to the shore. He felt the boat grinding on the sand, and in the darkness could discover the bleak coast-line. Then the instinct of self-preservation returned to him, and leaping into the surf he scrambled to land. The world soon became once more real about him, and he fell into the clutches of a baser fear. Then he fled, blindly and aimlessly. The next night Mr. Arncliffe was at his London club, very talkative, but inwardly agitated by a horrible dream. He changed his mind about pitching a story in the north country, and made no other journey to Hart-hope upon his sister's affairs.



## CHAPTER V

### BAPTISMAL

FROM that time Mr. Brant's stipulation was strictly observed, and his life at Harthope went on undisturbed. He undertook his new duties with characteristic vigour, and a principal part of these lay in the education of his boy. It was not that he was a man to make light of the clerical functions, but force of habit had got his life into such a routine of industrious repose that his day found room for much multifarious employment. His first winter happened to be a particularly mild and dry one, so he continued to wander far and wide over the hills, preparing all his best sermons in the open air. As he had done in his first living, so here he entered upon a systematic study of the country surrounding him. From every hill and dale, homestead and cottage, he extracted some record of interest. Pious though he was, romantic lore formed by no means the least part of his care. He entered with zest into every glimpse of the ferocity or tenderness of old times which song or tradition held in memory, and he never scrupled to combine such picturesque and dramatic circumstances with his observations of cloud and flower, to enforce the attention of his congregation from the pulpit. But especially did he narrate these things in plain, graphic language to his son Yordas, or, as he now always called him shortly, Ord. The lad was a sturdy

little fellow, and he accompanied his father in all wanderings at all within his range. In order to extend this companionship, and to save the boy from injurious fatigue, Mr. Brant frequently carried him for miles at a time upon his back ; and, so mounted, the child would make his steed charge impetuously down a brae in mimic counterfeits of some favourite moss-trooper of whose exploits he had learned.

For the first two years this imaginative growth formed the chief part of Ord's training. The parson's practice fell upon fertile ground. Young as he was, to actual facts the boy added store of fancies of his own. He virtually taught himself to read in the graveyard. With his piece of bread clutched in one hand and his little forefinger of the other tracing the incisions in the stones, he would lie for hours in the sun, prostrate on the flat slabs or kneeling in front of the headstones upon the green mounds. As he got older, the habit thus early acquired did not leave him, for, when familiarity with the alphabet had been gained, he went on to a fanciful review of the departed personages recorded. From the brief details he found there, a whole life-history was constructed for each of the names. Thus every stone became an actual acquaintance of his imagination, and took the place of those living companions which the remote locality was unable to afford.

But with such children as there were within reach the child had full intercourse. He did not accompany them on their daily march of over four miles to school, for his father undertook his education himself, but in bird-nesting, fishing, and similar childish diversions Yordas took his part—so far, at least, as his inclination prompted. He was not very sociable, and would, even in those years, prefer the company of one congenial friend to the games of a mixed number. Moreover, his chief associate was a girl and not a boy ;

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and this instinctive selection seemed to gain his father's approval, for before Yordas was eight the parson had this child down to his house daily to share the lessons of his son.

It was a daughter of the loyal Abram Gourlock, by name Baillie, and nearly of Ord's age; and to this sympathetic companion would the lad pour out all his fancies and observations alike with untiring zeal. Gradually this companionship more and more sufficed him, and intercourse with the more practically minded died away. Mr. Brant's influence over the girl developed faculties in her too which but for this opportunity would not have unfolded, and they again reacted upon Ord.

It might have seemed that the parson's philosophy had solved all the perplexities of life, so unruffled was the current of existence in that valley of Harthope. Year after year it continued so with unbroken regularity, not even the inevitable fluctuations of childish ailments visiting the parsonage. No doubt Mr. Brant must have had deep undercurrents of meditation of his own, but he never showed them. If any tremors of curiosity ever came to him with regard to that outside world, they had to remain unsatisfied. He purposely refrained from the smallest inquiry. Of the fortunes of his wife or her brother Bertram he knew positively nothing. The portion of his income which he regularly allotted was conveyed through a third person; but as it was appropriated, Eleanor was presumably alive.

It was not until he was thirteen that Yordas had even an accident bad enough to confine him to the house. In June that year he fell from the Raven's Crag, and although the consequences put him in no danger he was not able to follow his ordinary pursuits for some time. That, however, in itself was not the main issue resulting from it. He was always fond of

books and was allowed the free range of his father's library. During these days of confinement he was a good deal in the study, and one morning when the parson had gone up to Redburnshank to see Abram about "clipping" the sheep, and Ord was left to amuse himself in that room, whilst ransacking the bookshelves he made a discovery which had a startling effect on him. In the middle of a book called *The Rivers, Mountains, and Sea Coast of Yorkshire*, he found a loose letter and read it. It was that one with which Eleanor had taken leave of husband and home some years previously. The point that chiefly affected the boy was the discovery of his own name being Yordas. After putting back the letter where he had found it, and replacing the volume, he rushed out to Martha in the kitchen, for she must know all about the mystery.

"Martha, what's my proper name?" he cried excitedly.

"Bless the lad! Isn't it what your father has allus called you?"

"No, I dinna believe it is. Is it no' Yordas?"

"What a name for a Christian! Thah's nowt but fancies, lad. Get on wi' your lessons. I'm throng."

Ord drew his own conclusions from the woman's petulance. It was always in her native Yorkshire language that she evaded topics of discussion which she did not wish to go into, and the boy retired to the study.

"Well, laddie," said his father on finding him still there some time later, "what's the subject this morning?"

"I believe there's a lot in names, father," was the reply. "Who am I called after?"

The parson looked reflectively for a moment into the boy's face, and Ord blushed. He suddenly felt the deep personal nature of the inquiry. Although

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on a footing of the frankest intimacy with his father, he was now all at once, and for the first time, brought face to face with the peculiar Brant temperament. He felt that he had wounded his father, and shrank timidly from his own question.

"Why, what is your name?" asked the elder.

"Isn't it Yordas?"

"How did you find that out?"

The two looked into each other's face fearlessly, the resolute, rather grim expression of the father's features relaxing into sudden tenderness as he sounded the pure depths of the boy's eyes.

"From a letter I found in Phillips's *Yorkshire* this morning."

The man nodded, and even smiled, then imprinted a kiss upon his son's open forehead.

"Yes, I have been looking for that letter for years. I will satisfy your curiosity when we are alone again. Run and get ready for dinner." And Yordas gladly escaped.

Thereupon Mr. Brant took down the volume referred to. Running his thumb over the edges he found the letter near the middle, and with a hurried, almost furtive, glance at it put it away in his locked desk. He paused at the window for a moment, then went to prepare himself for the meal.

That afternoon the parson talked a long time to the boy in the study.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOMEWARDS

LIFE could never quite resume its old simple current after that discovery, for Yordas was inevitably altered. Although his mind continued to run principally upon the new name he had found, the absent mother could never regain the mythical character she had occupied in his imagination before. He never uttered another word to his father about it, but he constructed a whole realm of ideas for himself. As to the name, he gloried in it. From it names assumed a new significance, almost of a magical kind, the whole of which was incorporated with the boy's own life in a way to exalt him to that atmosphere of heroes and giants of which he had read so much.

"H'm, your name is Baillie Gourlock," observed he to his girl-companion a day or two later in a sententious way.

"Of course it is," laughed she. "What do you say that for?"

"Do you know who they called you after?"

The thought had never occurred to the girl before, and she said so.

"But I know," said Yordas. "Come on and I'll show you." Thereupon he jumped into the churchyard and told his companion to follow. She had been already impressed by the boy's mysterious behaviour, so she went expectantly. Before an

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upright stone at the east end of the church he stood. Baillie's eyes fell immediately on her own surname, Gourlock, upon it. The stone was an old one and far from erect, having both sunk and leant forward. But it was plain that some sods had been recently cut out from the front at its root. Following Ord's example the girl knelt in the grass, and with their heads together she traced the words which he read out.

"That's who you're named after," he said in conclusion.

"And who was it? It's a long time ago."

"When you're twenty it will be exactly a hundred years. There's no' been a Baillie since till you."

"How do you know?" asked the girl, looking at him with her lips apart.

"If you could be like her you'd be something like a lass," was the inconsequent reply. "There ought to have been a ballad made about her, and there would have been if I'd been alive at that time."

"Well, tell me. How can I be like her if I dinna ken what she was like?" retorted Baillie impatiently. "She was only twenty when she died, anyway. Grandmother's seventy-eight."

"Ay, but yon woman was killed. • There's a tale about her which I want to find out."

"I'll ask grandmother." •

"Ay, do; she'll know it. I dinna believe you know what *my* name is," added the boy archly.

Baillie stared.

"It's no' Ord any more than whaup is the proper name of the curlew . . . No, lass, it's Yordas."

The boy put into his delivery of the name the whole weight of mysterious feeling inspired in him by the syllables.

"I never heard of such a name."

And Ord laughed with proud satisfaction at the effect on her.



"Come away to the linn!" cried he, and they ran away up the water together.

The effect upon Mr. Brant was no less than upon Yordas. He felt that one more chapter of his life was closed, that the childhood of his boy was over. From that time the intercourse between the two became of a more mature character. But the elder never made the least effort to direct his son's tastes into any particular channel with a view to practical life. All his aim seemed to be to develop the moral and intellectual resources upon a broad basis irrespective of commercial needs. A shepherd, certainly, Yordas might any day have been, for in the mysteries of that classical calling he had been initiated from his earliest years. Abram Gourlock, who was born of a race of shepherds, said he would rather trust to yon lad's opinion and assistance in anything belonging to a herd than to any man between Rothbury and Kelso. But this may, of course, have been partly the result of pride in a promising pupil, for it was under Abram's tuition that the parsonage flock had from the outset been managed.

These personal concerns of the parson, however, in no way seemed to affect his professional life. He had apparently formed a deliberate conception of what were his capabilities with regard to clerical life, and those he never failed to pursue consistently. The result of it was admitted by all. Whatever their persuasion, Mr. Brant kept up systematic intercourse with every house in his secluded parish, and in cases of emergency his last ministrations were sought indiscriminately by all. So simple was the man's creed, that in face of any trials of the human soul his plain piety could sustain the faulty or suffering, irrespective of merely doctrinal mists. The only instance in which his efforts had met with persistent rebuff was that of the house of Bridgend, which for some years had been



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occupied by a lonely blacksmith whom nobody could pretend to understand. It was the last house in Mr. Brant's territories, down the water and by the side of the Shilmerton road. Not even Yordas had succeeded in making much headway with this man, and Abram Gourlock had long privately confessed that he believed him to be an atheist. But this might possibly have arisen from the fact of the smith's having been known to refuse whisky, for the virtues of whisky were well known to be the amiable shepherd of Redburnshank's staunchest dogma.

Mr. Brant had now long ceased to press unacceptable attentions, and the district's intercourse with Bridgend was strictly confined to professional needs. But about three years after that incident of the letter at the parsonage, and so when Yordas had reached the age of sixteen, that very house and its inmate were to leap at once into parochial fame. The chief Shilmerton Fair was held in June, a function which Abram Gourlock had, of course, conscientiously attended since boyhood. This particular year his daughter Baillie had for the first time obtained her mother's permission to go with him, perhaps with the hope that the girl's company might exert a favourable influence over her father's love of conviviality. The wife Bella certainly had a few last words with her husband when he had put the horse into the cart ready for departure, and Abram had not failed to respond with the most affectionate caress and promise. But none the less, as she watched her bonnie Baillie disappear below the brae, the anxious mother felt a pang of regret at having allowed herself to be persuaded. Brilliant day of June that it was, it hung heavily about her, and she went out frequently after nightfall to look wearily at the summer stars.

The two travellers felt none of it. In the sun they drove gaily down the dale, intent upon a day of un-

clouded pleasure, and anxious to communicate their blithe spirits to everything about them. As they were approaching Bridgend their talk turned to the wheelwright, and when Abram saw the man himself at work outside he drew up the horse to indulge in the inevitable raillery.

"What, Gideon, are you no' gaun to be through, man, the day?" he cried. "It wa'd do you a power of good to be a human creatur' twa-three times in the twelvemonth."

"Ay, ay," was the response of the other, without looking up.

"Come away, man! Did you ever gaun to a fair in your life? You canna conjectur' what"—

"Ou ay, I ken 'em nicely," said the smith, looking up at his tormentor. "But why do you no' leave the lass at home? They're no places for the like of her." Abram laughed derisively, but Gideon did not remove his solemn eyes from Baillie's face for a moment.

"What harm 'll she come to?" jeered the shepherd.

"The world's full of harm." And, as Gideon turned away, Gourlock shouted out some snatch of his own philosophy and jogged the reins.

When they had gone, the other man looked up again and followed them with his eyes until they had cleared the steep Edge. He had a fine, handsome face, but for that cloud of sadness. The expression was increased almost to one of malignity as the thoughts which this chance meeting gave rise to closed about him. Through all that day the agitated look hardly left him, and he worked with a silent, dogged ferocity that gave some clue to the reputation he had gained, and betrayed the feverish activity of his meditations.

The joyous crowds and all the hilarity of fairs possessed him, but with a jeer of ironical mockery that in

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some mysterious way took the form of Baillie's radiant features. All the dark disorder of his life was laid bare by the vision thus thrust upon him, for through it all the missing years were gathered, and he was once more thrown upon a time when hopes were as high in him as in another, when his prospect was as clear. For Gideon had not always been a man of obscure habits. As he said, he too knew the nature of fairs, and had frequented them. But it was from a fair that all his woe had sprung, and Baillie's face recalled it. He had to go through it all again that day, from the November night on which, after the shepherds' show, he had met in the inn the smooth-tongued stranger in faultless riding attire, to the morning on which he had gathered that last string of seaweed on the beach which still hung suspended in his cottage as a memorial of that stranger's treachery.

But neither could Gideon's croak long haunt Baillie and her father on their way. They reached Shilmer-ton by eleven, and the girl first attended to all her mother's injunctions. The purchases were made and deposited in the cart in the inn-yard, and the necessary round of visits followed. Then she was free to order her day.

As Yordas had foretold, she was sadly disappointed. When used to the novelty of the scene, she tried one after another of the diversions afforded, but could get little amusement out of any of them, excepting only the Punch and Judy show. When she had watched this several times, she drew away from the crowded village and wandered along the road, mounting the hill behind. It was not that the girl felt any conscious dejection, for indeed the active scene had had a precisely opposite effect on her; but her long, intimate intercourse with the Harthope parsonage had carried her tastes away from fun of this kind. The day continued a magnificent one, and without any

original intention of taking a long walk, Baillie soon found herself intent upon reaching the summit of a high peak which rose clear in the blue sky before her. She gained it, and obtained such a view of the surrounding country, from the blue sea to her own hills on the western horizon, that she sat down there in the sun and passed a couple of hours with the curlews and skylarks.

In descending, she was thinking of that strange remark of the man at Bridgend, that the world is full of harm. All Mr. Brant's teaching and her own experiences so far had given her exactly an opposite impression. The world seemed to consist of nothing but laughter and joy.

"And I'd rather trust Mr. Brant than Gideon Thew," she concluded, scarcely knowing that she had uttered her conclusion aloud. Directly she had done so, she started with surprise and perhaps a little alarm.

She had come to a gate in the wall bordering the hill road, and, having fancied herself utterly alone, it was with a shock that she discovered she was not. Just under the wall outside sat a man whose fixed stare met hers as she leapt from the gate instead of opening it.

"Why would you rather trust Mr. Brant than Gideon Thew?" said he in a refined tone that at once put Baillie at her ease. She smiled and coloured a little, turning to go on without reply. But the stranger got up, and in response to his polite remark the girl stood still. She now saw that he wore knickerbockers and had a knapsack on his back. Although reared in such pastoral seclusion the frankness of childhood had not left Baillie yet, and she said that she thought Mr. Brant knew more.

"Perhaps he does," was the reply, and the man admitted that he knew Mr. Brant.



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But Baillie's surprise was increased by his telling her who she was, until he explained that he had just come up from the inn, at which he had met her father at dinner. He went on to say that he had left in her charge there a lady who was going up the dale, and who, at the innkeeper's suggestion, had obtained her father's promise of a place beside herself. Would she agree to it? She would be glad. And their meeting was at an end.

As she went down, in a flutter of expectation, Baillie thought that he might have told her something more; but still the incident was sufficient to relieve the tedium of the fair, and on arriving at the crowded village she found that her own interest in the scenes that she had left was increased by the occurrence. She soon encountered her father, who confirmed the report, and who impressed upon her the hour at which she must be in readiness at the inn. But then Baillie's shyness seemed to come upon her at once, and she strictly avoided the place of meeting until the twilight hour at which they were to set off.

Bertram Arncliffe was not much changed. His knapsack was old and shabby and his clothing well worn, but his face seemed to show that the world sat lightly upon him still. Nevertheless, for many years confident expectations had tottered to ceaseless disappointments, and, although no doubt in search of literary material still, he had as a matter of fact accompanied Eleanor thus far on her way in the course of the fortnight's annual holiday that his subordinate mercantile situation allowed. This chance encounter with Baillie seemed to impress him a good deal. After she disappeared at the road's turning he sat down again on his stone by the wall and allowed his memory to roam at will over the time and space he had traversed since last alighting on a fair in these north country hills.

"Mr. Brant—Gideon Thew"—the two names, in Baillie's intonation of them, haunted him through the cries of all the lonely moorland birds that voiced the miles of still sunlight around him.

"Poor Brant—poor Gideon!" sighed he at last. "How came *she* to know Gideon? I wish I had asked her."

But then, muttering that he was glad he had not, he turned his face away from Shilmerton and struck boldly to the north.

## CHAPTER VII

### AFTER THE FAIR

GIDEON locked his workshop door and stood out in the twilight to listen. He always did this on ceasing work, and unless the wind came holloing from the mountains, he seldom heard more than the babbling of the river in its broad stony bed and the cry of the peewits or sandpipers in the shingle. After a steep dip down Bleakhope Edge the road ran level to the bridge, then rose again to the moor on the other side of the water. Just before the bridge was his house, with workshop and shed beside it, adjoining a piece of roadside land encumbered with sawn timber, and rough cart-wheels, bits of old iron, implements of husbandry, and various other articles betokening the wheelwright's craft.

After his one assistant had left in the evening, the sounds of industry continued to be heard at the Bridgend, and people coming back to the hills from a sale or fair had seen his light and heard his anvil even on the stroke of midnight when the owls were clamorous around Woodhall. But to-night it was hardly ten and not dark, for on these June nights the sun set to the north of Skirlmoor, and the glow which followed it crept round the horizon behind the hills in readiness for the next morning's light. These were the days when Gideon knew something of his solitude. After a hard day's work he would go into

his half-furnished cottage and stare at the lots of those of his own age who took life differently. It began when the field-fares went and the curlews had flown up from the salt marshes to the sunlit moors. A spirit then seemed to animate the world which revealed to Gideon the gulf fixed between himself and it. He had felt this especially to-night, and he sank into a reverie as his eyes rested on the black outlines of the hills cut out from the pale sky. The unearthly bark of the herons from the West Wood, the plaint of a restless peewit on the haugh, even the cry of a belated cuckoo from nobody knew where did not arouse Gideon ; but suddenly a sound of quite a different kind, which came floating on the night air with more buoyancy than voice of heron or of owl, arrested his attention. It was exactly the opposite of the subdued note to which he himself and all around him was attuned. He listened attentively to the careless jollity of the refrain and had to smile.

"Poor Abram!" he muttered, and once again the voice came rollicking round the mountains—

"D'ye ken John Peel wi' his coat so grey?  
D'ye ken John Peel at the break o' the day?  
D'ye ken John Peel when he's far—far—away,  
Wi' his hounds and his horn i' the mor—ning?"

Gideon stood still to listen, for he knew the voice was as yet two miles away. The exact degree of the shepherd's hilarity was proclaimed by his ditty. As he drove homewards under the stars, Gourlock had been roaring to the silent hills his jovial hunting-song ever since he left Shilmerton. From a vociferous yell it had gradually lapsed to these incoherent snatches, never failing, however, to rise again into full strength at the call of the animating chorus. So infectious was the tune that for a moment Gideon fell to humming the ungodly ballad, but he picked



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himself up and turned towards the house. Something again checked him, and he heard distinctly Abram's "whoop!" to his horse. They were on the crest of the Edge. But the clang of the hoofs did not cease. Thew's curiosity arose; the next moment it was alarm.

"Steady, father!"

"Aa' right, hinny!"

The voices seemed but a few yards instead of a mile away. For a minute more Gideon listened breathlessly: there was a shriek, and then the sounds ceased.

On reaching the upper part of the Edge, Thew found what he had supposed.

The disaster proved, however, to be less serious than he had expected. As he approached with his lantern, Abram in no uncertain voice challenged him, and Gideon replied.

"The varry man we'll be wanting," exclaimed Gourlock in triumph. "It's a smaa' matter, yon, Gideon," he went on, eyeing the broken cart to which the other professionally turned his light.

"Ay, there's not much in that; but is that the worst of the job?" And Thew looked round.

"Naebody else's the waar."

"And who have you got wîth you? Your own bones are not of so much consequence, man," continued the wheelwright angrily, "but I should think you could have taken better care of those that are."

For to Gideon's surprise his light showed a second female figure in addition to Gourlock's daughter sitting on the grass by the roadside. He had to repeat his question.

"Speir yoursel'. I d'na ken whae it is."

The stranger herself did not answer, but, from Baillie, Thew learned it was a lady who was going to Harthope. From her silence and the expression

of her features Gideon declared she was hurt. This, however, she herself promptly denied, in a voice contrasting strangely with the blunt vernacular of those that had spoken.

"There's naeboddy hort, I tell you, but the aa'd gig," exclaimed Gourlock. "And it was time yon couped the crans, for I've aye said it 'ud be the death o' me. You'll no' get a job out of yon, Gideon; dinna think it. You'll aiblins be"—

"Well, what are you gaun to do?" interrupted Gideon. "You've five rough miles to Harthope, and two mair to Redburnshank, and only one horse between you."

"The lady 'ull do what she has a mind. Baillie and me'll just tak' the road blithely, man," replied Abram.

"Is there no house that will shelter me till morning?" inquired the stranger anxiously. "I simply cannot walk five miles."

"Naeboddy 'ull tak' you in, hinny, hereaway. Ye should ha' made up your mind afore ye left Shilmerton."

"Dinna be rude, father," cried Baillie. "It is just altogether your fault. If I'd thought you could have behaved so in company I wouldna have let the lady leave Shilmerton. But Mr. Thew will take her in, I'm sure."

Gourlock hummed "John Peel," whilst Gideon protested the impossibility of such an arrangement. The lady, overcome by the blank wretchedness of the outlook, burst into tears, but soon recovered herself, as it seemed angrily.

"No, I will trouble none of you," she said, rising from the grass, and, casting her eyes quickly to the stars, which looked down benignly from the summer sky, without another word she left them.

"That 'll no' do, onyway," remarked Abram, whose

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good-nature was never much obscured. "What for canna you tak' the leddy in, Gideon?" he added impatiently. "She's no' a bit lassie, for aa' her good looks. Are you feared for your char'cter? Man alive," laughed he, "the Corbie's Crag yonder wa'd as soon be charged wi' worrying the sheep as you'd be suspected in a matter like yon. But I'll tell you what. Baillie 'ull just stay wi' you alongside o' her, and then the twae o' them can upha'd ye, I'se warr'nt. They'll walk up to Harthope canny the morn's morning."

Gideon was astonished at so much sense from Gourlock, for to him the man's "sinless infirmity" (as Abram's own wife charitably construed his weakness) suggested all the horrible chaos of depravity.

"But how'll you get through yourself without Baillie?" asked Thew.

"Ha'd away, man! Do you think Charlie does no' ken the road if I'm in doubt mysel'? We'll do fine."

A few words with Baillie confirmed this proposal, and when the two men had stowed the cart away in the hedge-bottom, Gourlock, with his horse by the reins, led the way down the hill. The stranger was quickly overtaken, and as she had heard all the words that had led to the arrangement, she was brought readily to agree.

Abram's seven miles farther into the hill recesses meant nothing to him, whatever the conditions. When near Thew's house, he hinted that "a wee drappie o' whisky" would put him in heart for the journey; but as the wheelwright promptly repudiated the existence of a drop of such poison within many a mile of him, the shepherd confided to his horse his opinion of the confession.

"Puir fellow! Nae wonder you're sae dour and maachless," said he more loudly. "Whether or no', I'll do fine. But, Gideon!" he added, turning back

and drawing the other's ear close to his lips, "I believe yon's the parson's wife."

Therewith he set foot to the bridge, and as Thew was admitting his two guests to his dark cottage, the silence of the countryside was again rudely broken by the inspiring strains of "Do you ken John Peel?" blending with the notes of the startled birds that rose from the shingle and heather beyond the water.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DAWN

THE situation was a new one for Gideon Thew. This summer weather his lamp was not trimmed, but he put light to a candle. It was only once a week that a woman entered his cottage to put it to rights, yet now everything seemed clean and in order. The pendulum in the clock swung hoarsely and solemnly; on the table lay an open book and the things from the last meal.

Whilst Gideon removed the latter, his younger visitor looked around with curiosity. To her surprise, it was like anybody else's house. She peeped at his book. It was the Bible. Yet he never came to church, and she knew from hearsay that he did not go down to the meeting. There was a dresser with some other books upon it, but she could not distinguish the titles of them. What astonished her most was a long tress of black seaweed hanging on the wall.

None felt at ease, but, young as she was, Baillie was the first to accept the situation.

"May I help you, Mr. Thew?" she asked, as she saw Gideon re-laying the table in a dumb show of hospitality, and without waiting for a reply Baillie set about such things as she could do without breach of privacy. The man had brought out many unnecessary articles, and as he still looked for more

he noticed the quick featliness with which Baillie corrected his errors.

"Ay," he exclaimed at last, standing up with his back to the fireplace; "you'll do it better than me. I'll just leave you to yourselves. Get on as you best can."

Without further remark he went to the door, and it was then his movements seemed first to arouse the stranger.

"But we cannot turn you out of your house," she said, rising in dismay, or at least anxious politeness.

"Ou ay, I shall do well enough. I often work through the night. I've plenty to do. I shall be in the workshop, if you want anything." And without waiting for an answer Gideon was gone.

He went directly to his shop and unlocked it, but before striking a light he stood in the doorway and looked round. Abram Gourlock's voice could even still be heard as he trudged his homeward way, but to this Thew paid no heed. His eyes were immovably fixed on the scene he had just left by his own hearth, and although he did eventually turn to the work of which he had spoken he contemplated the same scene frequently throughout the night.

Baillie alone entered into the spirit of the adventure. She was barely sixteen, but it was with something like a thrill of triumph that she took charge of the establishment of Gideon Thew. Gossip was so rife with the mysteries of his solitary life that her active fancy raised the situation to a romantic height. She wished there had been a little more of the actually mysterious to support it. Even when she opened the clock case, there was nothing inside but ordinary pendulum and weights. She turned away in disappointment. Unknown to Baillie her companion had watched this movement.

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"What are you looking for?" she asked listlessly as the girl faced her.

"Anything," was the odd reply, and Baillie blushed.

"Anything strange, you mean?" And the other nodded. "Don't you live about here then?"

"Oh yes, in the hills at Redburnshank, about seven miles from here."

"And don't you know the man that lives here—Mr. Thew, do you call him?"

"He's not fond of people knowing him. It's several years since he came up here from the sea, and he aye keeps to himself. Some call him an atheist."

"But you see he reads his Bible," remarked the lady, pointing to the book where it lay on the table. "I suppose it means that he is a little better than other people. Rumours often begin in that."

Their eyes met, and the one look demolished more of the constraint between them than all their intercourse before. The girl smiled.

"They often do. That's exactly what Mr. Brant says." Baillie did not see her companion start.

"Who is Mr. Brant?"

"The parson at Harthope," said the girl, with a look of shrewdness beyond her years. "You must ken that, for it's to the parsonage you want to go, isn't it?"

"Yes, of course. But I hardly know what I do or don't know. All is so strange up here. Do you like Mr. Brant?"

"Certainly," said Baillie, as if the question could not have occurred to her before.

"You go to his church, then?" Another nod.

"Is it a big village?"

"What, Harthope? There's no village. Shilmerton's the last. At Harthope there's only just the church and parsonage by the burnside."



The lady then said that she remembered, muttered that she was glad, and sank again into a state of meditation. Soon Baillie saw that she was asleep.

It was then that the girl opened the box-bed which occupied one end of the room. When she had done so, she herself lay down on a black horsehair couch by the window, and looked intently at the face now fallen sideways in profound repose.

The features were thin and refined, and just then without colour. Baillie did not feel impulsively drawn to the face, but the peculiar circumstances of the lady's visit to Harthope invested her with interest. In a life of so much uniformity, the incident seemed important, especially in face of the secluded habits of Mr. Brant. Baillie's fancy ran into various channels. She had not overheard her father's confidential conjecture, so that all her ideas sprang independently from her own active brain. But whilst she thus speculated, the face fell forwards and the eyes at once opened. The lady, however, seemed scarcely to wake. Stupefied with fatigue, she allowed her companion to assist her to the bed, and muttering, "No, Anthony," fell over on the pillow, again sound asleep. Baillie blew out the candle, and was herself also soon in a profound slumber.

Gideon did not work the whole night, although he sought no rest. From his workshop he passed occasionally out into the dark, into such brief obscurity as there was that summer night, and strode restlessly to and fro between his house and the middle of the bridge. His eyes were always downwards, no glance ever going to the cottage as he passed it. But as the light grew, he kept to his work. It was here that Baillie found him.

"Breakfast is ready, Mr. Thew," said she gaily, as with a start Gideon was aware of a shadow in the doorway. He looked up at her, and saw through

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the triangle which her arm made with her side the first rim of the sun peering round Cock Ridge. This was his sufficient chronometer.

"Why, it's not four o'clock," he cried.

"But you must be hungry. Would you like better to have it here?"

"No!" exclaimed he ferociously as he flung down his tools. "You're a queer lass."

"What makes you think so, Mr. Thew?" He stood before leaving his workshop to look at her. She frankly returned the look.

"You're but a bit lass, but you're more menseful than most women."

"Anybody could say that," replied Baillie, turning away in disappointment.

"And am I not anybody?" asked Thew in surprise.

"You dinna think so," she laughed. "Eh, just look at yon sun and the wreath along the water! It's bonnie."

The sun had cleared the ridge, and, as they looked, the silence of the morning fell between them. Birds and the sparkling water alone proclaimed it. The hilltops were wondrously clear.

"Why does not the lady come out to see it?" asked Thew.

"She's still asleep. I should think she's come from the town."

"Are you not acquainted with her?"

Baillie explained the casual encounter the night before, and that her father had only given the stranger a lift on the suggestion of the Shilmerton innkeeper. They didn't know who she was.

"But if she's asleep I canna go in," said Thew suddenly.

"I thought you'd say that"; and without waiting for anything more Baillie went off to the house. In a minute or two she returned with a tray.

"I couldna find any eggs. Why do you no' keep fowls?"

Gideon was silent with astonishment. The fragrance of the hot bacon and tea immediately convinced him of his hunger. He just watched Baillie put it ready on the grass.

"Fetch another cup and plate," said he.

Baillie did so and returned. They then sat down to the meal together.

"I'd have had you some trout if I'd thought. I'm only used to living alone."

"Why do you live alone, Mr. Thew?"

So artlessly was the question put that Gideon did not even look up.

"Ay, why?" said he. "The parson lives alone, doesn't he?" he added after a brief pause.

"No, he has his son and housekeeper with him."

"Ay, but not his wife."

"She's dead, I suppose."

Baillie said it in an innocent matter-of-fact tone, but was suddenly aware of Gideon's thoughts.

"Isn't she?" cried the girl, with a start of surprise.

"Nay, how should I know? You've lived here-away longer than I."

"I've lived at Redburnshank a' my life. I've never heard"—And Baillie was checked by the extraordinary thought which possessed her. "Is yon her?" she said excitedly. "Is yon Mrs. Brant? Is yon Ord's mother?"

"Nay, lass, I canna tell you."

But the mere speculation had had a powerful effect on Baillie, and when, a few minutes later, the lady herself came out into the sunlight, she assumed a wholly altered aspect in the girl's eyes. The night's rest seemed to have benefited the stranger, and she smiled as she came forward to the repast. She insisted upon joining them there, and so with the

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necessary additions the meal went on. But the conversation was at an end. Thew was struck silent by his additional guest, and Baillie's frank tongue was crippled by her new-born suspicion. Brief question and answer of things immediately around had to suffice.

As soon as mere hunger was satisfied the lady expressed anxiety to depart. She confessed her inability to offer Gideon payment for his kindness, and he grumbled discontent at the suggestion. Then she apologised. Baillie had gone into the cottage, so they both went to her there. She was washing up the things. The clock showed a quarter to five. They heard it strike the hour as they were crossing the bridge.

From his window Gideon watched the figures mount the open road over the moor, and when they had passed he still stood there. Whatever the effect on the others, for him the night had broken a spell. The almost childish frankness of Baillie had swept like a bow across his soul strings, and although no distinct harmony had resulted, the notes that it had evoked rang clear and deep. After looking round carefully at the neatness that the girl's hands had established, he washed and put on his best clothes.

At all times Thew presented a handsome figure, so that it was only a little loss of dignity he had suffered by the change. His assistant had to stare long on arriving before he could realise what he saw.

"What's wrong?" was at length all the inquiry the man could utter.

Gideon gave no direct answer. He immediately fell to giving instructions about the work.

"Ay," said the other, "ay."

"And if I'm no' back before you gaun'," Thew

concluded, "just put the key in its place in the dike."

"Ay."

That was all that passed between them. A few minutes later Gideon was mounting the Edge, and his man staring in astonishment after him.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PARSON

**A**BRAM reached home safely before one o'clock, and raised the last stave of his ditty as he ascended the brae to his own house. The dogs barked to welcome him, and simultaneously the wife came out with a lantern to show the way.

"Aa' right, Bella!" cried the man cheerily, and even tenderly, in answer to her challenge. "Dinna flite, my hinny. Nay, my wee woman"—

"Eh, man, you'll never gie a thought to me. But where's the bairn?"

"Ha'd a wee and ye'll ken all about it. Ay, ay, she's safe enough, hinny. Woo, Charlie!"

They stabled the horse together, whilst the man diplomatically satisfied the anxious curiosity of his companion with hints at the marvellous side of his adventure.

"The parson's wife!" exclaimed the woman as she heard his story. "That's just a daft notion of your ain, man. Why, the parson's been here himsel' the night to hae you down to the clipping on Thursday, and do you think a body like yon 'ud come through without letting him have wit of it beforehand? Come away! You'll never mend till you sup your last lang draught at the ford."

Abram readily gave in, and was soon engaged upon the supper prepared for him. There were no wives like Bella.

He was astir at his usual hour in the morning, and decided to go down to the parsonage forthwith. In his present unclouded state caution asserted itself, and he repented of having brought Mr. Brant's visitor even so far on her journey without a previous consultation with the clergyman. Whilst always boastful of his own salvation in a wife, he held to the proverbial conception of women, and was not at all easy at being the means of exposing Mr. Brant to any of their risky cantrips. Anyway, he would now do all that was possible to repair his error by giving the parson all the start he could.

So he set off early to Harthope. June lay upon the mountains with a peculiar lustre that year, for it had been a wintry spring. All nature seemed to have burst at once into a glorious laugh. It was no mere awakening smile, but full-hearted laughter, yet with all the vivacity of radiant youth. It skipped across the fells, and danced along the valleys; hid in the fresh green fern and curled in every ripple of the waters. But Abram Gourlock was full-grown and had to look about. However, at the broken bridge where the Red burn joined the Harthope water, his eye happened to fall on the first briar-rose, then on a whole bunch of roses, for there was a bush on a rock studded with gems. Then Abram was again a laddie. Whilst he paused to look at them, his eye chanced also to see a group of lambs cutting their odd capers on the sunlit braes.

"My certie!" cried the man, at last subdued, "but it's gran'! I canna haad mysel'. I just want to play the fool like yon." And his laughter rang clarion-like along the two valleys. Then he felt ashamed and went briskly on his way.

The track which he kept lay up the green defile, by the side of the stony water. As he advanced, the noise of the stream and the notes of the few birds



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frequenting it were drowned by the clamour of a flock of sheep. "Come ahint!" he had to say frequently to his dog, which was anxiously alert at the uproar, and the animal would immediately resume its place at the master's heels.

After going about a mile they reached the scene of the tumult upon turning a sharp corner in the hills.

Another dog, with some assistance from a man and boy, was engaged in driving a company of sheep into the stell, as the fold enclosed in a circular turf-capped wall was called, which occupied the green level space between the hillfoot and the burn. Just as Abram came in sight, the first sheep boldly rushed into the enclosure and the rest followed like a stream.

"Gran' mornen', Mr. Brant," cried Gourlock as he came up.

"Grand morning, Abram," was the reply. And as a hurdle was placed across the entrance to the stell, the two men at once discussed the merits of the sheep before them and spoke of their plans for the shearing.

"But I said Thursday," observed Mr. Brant. "What are you down for the day?"

Gourlock looked at the boy.

"Can I have twa-three words with you?"

"Certainly. Ord, we'll have the Latin reading at nine," said Mr. Brant.

"Out here, father?"

The other nodded, and the boy went away to the house.

"You were through to Shilmerton then?"

"I was, Mr. Brant, and a tarr'ble strange affair happened as I came back." Therewith Abram broke without preface into an account of his meeting with the strange lady who was inquiring for Harthope, of the innkeeper's suggestion that she should ride up with them, and of the mishap on Bleakhope Edge in the dark. The other listened without any movement

or alteration of a feature. His eyes were fixed upon the sheep, and they remained there as his companion proceeded with his frank self-condemnation, his rude apology, and finally his offer immediately to return down the water and dispose of the visitor exactly as the clergyman should direct.

"Thank you, Abram," said Mr. Brant composedly. "No, no, you did quite right. I will go down myself. It is my wife. Let us go to the house." And not another word was spoken.

The little church and parsonage stood just above the stream, attended by a few trees of such size as was possible here. The dwelling was a square structure of grey stone with four windows and a door in front, facing a walled-in enclosure, used as a garden, and fringed all round with hoary old gooseberry and currant bushes. The ground in the midst was full of vegetables, excepting a strip on each side of the path in which, between roses, tufts of saxifrages and other flowers from the hills were blooming. But the men entered by the back, which resembled that of any little mountain homestead. Bidding his visitor sit and rest a while, the clergyman called his housekeeper to attend him to the study.

"Martha," said the clergyman, when the door was closed behind them, "Eleanor is on her way here. She is now at Bridgend."

"Are those your news? Then they're bad 'uns," replied the elderly woman abruptly.

"I am not sure that they are bad. At anyrate you will be prepared to receive her with the utmost kindness. You will give me the deepest pain if you do otherwise. Please get the spare room ready."

"Ay, Mr. Brant, I'll do what you bid me, but you know we never agreed about yon and never shall. When'll she be here?"

"I am now going to walk down and meet her. I

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would rather get the first meeting over at a distance. Remember," said the parson in an altered voice, one of unanswerable sternness, "remember it was all my fault."

"It was nowt o' t' sort," proclaimed the other as stoutly, and prepared to leave the room. At the door Mr. Brant asked her to send Ord in to him, and the woman departed.

The boy on entering found his father sitting in a chair by the window, and knew instantly by his face that he had something weighty to impart. It immediately recalled that interview, that one interview only, that they had had three years ago.

"My boy, you remember that letter you found which revealed your full name to you? I then gave you such details of my life as seemed fit, and promised you more when you were older. That time, I think, is at hand. I told you that your mother was living. I now hear that she will be here to-day. I wish you would go up to Redburnshank with Abram and stay till the evening. We cannot attend to the sheep to-day."

They looked at each other, and a deep colour suffused the lad's face as he turned his eyes to the window.

"You are glad?" said the father, with a smile.

"Oh yes!" But instantly, at a fresh thought, Ord looked back despite the haze between his eyelashes.

Then the clergyman got up.

"Of course you are, laddie," said he hurriedly. "But don't be too romantic. Life *is* very real, you know. If you'll wait with Abram a minute we can go as far as the linn together."

Mr. Brant presented a plain clerical appearance as he walked down the valley. At the junction of the waters his companions left him and he went on more slowly when alone.



He had fixed the point at which he should stay to await the traveller, and when he reached it he sat on a large boulder by the water's edge, below which the river formed a small pool wherein a white-breasted dipper was at the moment sporting. The man's face was rugged, and if casually seen would have suggested austere determination more than the moral or religious virtues. He had more resemblance to the bits of whinstone crag that peeped out of the wild hills about him, shapeless and unhewn, than to the graceful contours of the wrought and polished marble. Indeed, nobody had ever known what it was that had taken a son of Reuben Brant from his home amidst the brown and craggy moorlands of the Tees to seek the smooth and conventional sanctuary of the Church. As he was born of a race of blunt and sturdy shepherds, pious enough some of them in their way, but shamelessly human the others, the trait which had thus at length refined itself to so polite a course of life was intricate and obscure. Nor had Anthony been the one to afford any aid to the curious in unravelling the clue. What he had done in those early years had been accomplished without inquiry or consultation, in the face of every social and material obstacle, without one single plea for assistance and without the smallest proffer of help. But as it was silent so was his success complete. Here, perhaps, the young man's conventionality had ended. His later development, we know, had seemed to show that his departure from family characteristics was not so flagrant as had appeared.

He had not sat long beside the river, apparently watching the dipper, but really plunged in independent thought, before he took a piece of paper from his pocket and held it open before him. It was that letter which Yordas had found that he was reading.

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As he now once more read it, Mr. Brant's main reflection turned upon his own progress in self-control. Having satisfied himself on this point, he replaced the letter in his coat and looked again at the water.

## CHAPTER X

### BY THE WATERS

BAILLIE and her companion walked with their backs to the sun. After the first mild exhilaration with which the morning had inspired the stranger, she sank back into a listless state, and the two proceeded in silence. The lady was again aroused by their sudden entrance upon a new part of the valley. On turning a corner, a wide stretch opened out before them, quite straight for upwards of half a mile, with a smooth slope of unbroken hill on either side.

"Ay, that's bonnie," said Baillie, as she saw her companion struck with astonishment.

"It reminds me of another place," was the reply, and both looked silently before them.

The water came like a glittering blue thread amongst the rocks, varied here and there with the foam of little torrents, and all contrasting with the smooth green sheep-dotted margin which spread wide and level as a floor to where the hillfoot abruptly stopped them. Suddenly, the stranger again went on.

"Is this Harthope?" she asked.

"This is the Harthope water. Here the parish begins. The church is two miles higher up."

"And what is that black thing by the stream?"

"I think it is Mr. Brant."

As they got nearer they saw distinctly that it was.

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But before they reached the spot where he was sitting, the lady stopped and asked Baillie to go on alone. She came up to the clergyman and spoke to him. He told her of his meeting with her father, and, seeing her face, told her also who her companion was. Then the girl went forward quickly, and dared not look back until she had gone a mile. Nobody could be seen then.

Mr. Brant rose and approached his wife. At the moment both seemed supremely self-controlled. The man just extended both his hands, and his wife laid both hers between them.

"So you have come, Eleanor."

"I have failed. All that you said was true."

With a look at her face he simply said, "You should have come much earlier." And the sand-pipers sped whistling down the stream beside them. Without any more words just then, they turned and walked side by side homewards.

Presently Eleanor's tongue was loosened, and she burst into impassioned self-humiliation and remorse. The parson did not check her, but, when she paused, he interposed some grave words of consolation, pointing out how the world always did deceive the very best and wisest, and that all—

"But it did not deceive you," she interrupted.

"Not deceive me!" cried he vehemently. "It was solely my deception that led to yours. But for me, your life would have followed the ordinary channel and have known no break. Had I not swerved from my first convictions, nay, from my deliberately taken vows, all this would never have been. Do not reopen this apportionment of guilt, I beseech you. As we cannot step backwards, let us not even turn our eyes in that direction. Duty lies perpetually and exclusively in front. In *that* there is always consolation and always hope. For us it must suffice. But



we must decide the position of our boy. His life is yet before him."

"He is now sixteen," murmured Eleanor.

"He is now sixteen, and mature for his years," resumed the parson, hearing all her unexpressed anxiety for information. "I have educated him myself, with a view of course to my own convictions, but I trust also with the widest view to his own life. He already knows something of you. Now he must know all. I have foreseen it since our parting, and to provide against the uncertainties of life I wrote out, on my first arrival here, an account of our past, which, young as he is, I have resolved with your approval to place in his hands to-night. He should know it before your meeting, and I have arranged for his absence to-day. Shall we sit here whilst I read you my statement? Or, you are tired, you would rather not go into it now?"

"I cannot rest before it is settled."

So they sat down on the grass, and, in the clear masculine tones of her husband, Eleanor had to hear that graphic record of their past as it had appeared to him. So remote was it from all that had since happened, so chaotic the wide gulf that intervened, that the wife for some time heard it almost as an independent tale. Certain vivid glimpses, however,—certain revelations,—touched the deepest chords within her, and her eyes filled; but it was not until Mr. Brant's voice had ceased that Eleanor experienced its full effect upon her.

"Anthony, you are too good," she exclaimed, and burst into a fit of long and passionate weeping.

It was agreed that their son should read the statement, Eleanor inwardly resolving to supplement the story with remorseful representations of her own. But on their way home the two hardly spoke again. Though able to control his emotions, that re-opened

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chapter of his existence had also powerfully affected Mr. Brant. When he reached the parsonage, and had seen all his wife's wants supplied, he none the less went about his ordinary employments.

Eleanor retired to the room which had been prepared for her, and had meals taken to her there. The day outside continued one of the utmost brilliance, and, with the window thrown widely open, the lady lay motionless in the silence of the hills for hours, with her eyes scarcely moving from the sunlit patch of bent-grass opposite. A sheep or a bird occasionally crossed it, but there were no other signs of life. Throughout the afternoon she slept.

Awaking suddenly, she found a tray spread with tea-things beside her. She had been dreaming of storms, so it was with the strangest sense of contrast she beheld the placid scene around. The sun was still on that patch of grass, but mellow; the same sounds proclaimed the quiet. In a gathering consciousness, Eleanor burst into passionate prayer.

The sun had gone from the valley before she ventured from her room. Hearing the footstep on the staircase, Mr. Brant opened his study door and beckoned his wife inside.

"I expect the boy every moment. Will you stay in here until he comes?"

"Let me go into the church."

The parson started at the odd request, and misunderstood it. "He will not come in here," he said.

"It is not for that," continued his wife hurriedly. "Anthony, it is not for that."

The clergyman waited.

"All my life has been godless. Not until this day have I known what your religion is. Now I do know it. From this day I can redeem the past. Help me, Anthony, by all the sacred strength that has sustained yourself! Here I cast off the world.

From this moment I can become what you wish me. Come with me to the altar, that we may blot out the past!"

"Beware of this emotion," said the parson calmly, and, as Eleanor felt, coldly.

"No, of this emotion I need not beware. It only can guide me upwards; from it alone can I get the peace and rest that for years has been denied me. My husband, you know what it has done for you. Give me the same source of power."

"I? How can I give you such a thing?"

In agitation Mr. Brant walked to the other end of the room and looked at his wife. Her eyes went to the ground. "Such things, Eleanor, are not for mere mortal to give or to withhold. Passion or impulse never obtained them. They can only come as the reward for a deliberate tendency of life. How and where to seek them, you know."

"I do know," cried the woman, with pathetic earnestness, "and I ask you to help me. You have done more than any man has done before. Complete your work. Take me to your fold."

"Do you think the ceremonies of my church can help you? Some, I believe, claim that power for them, but I dare not. If you trust to those poor walls of stone for an emotion that you cannot acquire on God's bare hillside, in God's name I must tell you that you trust in vain. Trust it not. It is a delusion. It will deceive you with a bitterness to which the world's deception is honeycomb."

"Then I am lost," exclaimed Eleanor, clenching her hands before her until they were white as marble. "Love has failed me; the world has deceived me; if God also turns His face from me where is my hope?"

"God turns His face from no seeker," said the parson sternly. "But He demands that He should be

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sought in sincerity and truth. Seek Him then in the bracken and the heather. In them we *know* that He resides. Of yon edifice we have no such assurance. It partakes of the frailty of man. You think me harsh, but it is my duty to tell you this."

"Still, come! It will help me. I cannot pray on the bare hillside."

Eleanor stepped forward as she spoke, and the clergyman met her. The mere note of human appeal in accents that he found could still thrill him, obtain the mastery. Mr. Brant stood and trembled. The pale figure stood motionless before him in the twilight that already dimmed the room. He did not see that she had moved her hand, and so he received a electric shock when he felt it fold upon his own. From that moment he was vanquished.

"Come, Anthony, and save me."

Still he paused, battling with himself. But before Eleanor could again break the silence, she was wrapped in a swift, silent, passionate embrace, and she quietly wept there. In a few minutes they together left the house.

A cool fragrance filled the valley, and in solemn calm rose the steep slope on either hand. As the two figures crossed the green between the house and the churchyard, a heron started abruptly from the bed of the stream and sailed in majesty overhead before the still radiant sky. Eleanor's eyes rose to follow it and travelled to the clear rim of the mountain. She stopped and laid a hand on her companion's arm. Aroused from deep abstraction the clergyman followed her eyes to the summit.

"Is it the boy? . . . He is waving." And Eleanor raised her own hand.

"Yes, it will be the boy. But come! He often returns by the hilltop."

The church was never locked. The door creaked

on its hinges as the parson opened it, and awakened hollow echoes inside. Eleanor seemed to pause, but now that Mr. Brant had submitted he knew no hesitation. With a decisive step he walked to the altar and awaited his wife.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BOY

ORD strictly observed his father's request, and did not return home until the last sun's rays lay level as swords across the mountains. He did not choose the easier road by the valley, but struck in a direct line over the heights, so as to descend abruptly upon Harthope from the crest of the hill called the Snear.

On reaching this last point, he stood to gaze down into the hollow. The sun had now dipped, and it already seemed dusky in that narrow pass by contrast with the radiant afterglow from which he looked. Even at ordinary times the boy was fond of weaving fanciful themes around the objects of his home; but, agitated as his mind was to-day, it ranged summits unapproached before. Through the solemn repose and obscurity of the evening, the familiar scene became some realm of mystery, the numberless valleys amidst the green round fells being turned to shadowy pathways through which spectral beings filed in marvellous array. But all of them were female. Stately, queenly presences with faces draped, the features of which, however, the boy knew to be also clouded with grief. He, of course, was the doughty champion of them all. With a martial flourish of his arm he plunged into the defile. Then he stopped again, for at that moment his eye first

discerned the actual figures moving between the parsonage and the church. They vanished, and he continued his descent.

"She's come, Martha?" cried the boy as he entered the house.

"Ay, lad, she's come. But she'll not see you to-night. Get your supper."

"I had it at Redburnshank. Will you tell me something honestly, Martha?"

"I allus speak honest."

"Ay, if you speak at all. Do you think father is glad she's come back?"

"I cannot see why he should be."

"You can't, I know. He told me that you never liked her. But do you think he is glad?"

"Happen he is, for there's no knowing what notions a man 'ull get hold of. But she'll not stay long."

"What do you mean? I know father a good deal better than you do, and whatever it costs he'll do his duty."

"Oh ay, he's full enough o' duty. He'll nivver turn her out. But I reckon a man has a duty to hissels as well as to other people. His life has been brokken once, but it's no man's duty to have it brokken a second time for nobody."

"And hasn't my mother's life been broken?" asked Ord resentfully.

"Ay, by herself, but by nobody else. Wheer's her sense o' duty, think you? There's a bonnie sight o' duty in a woman coming home when she can mak' no better of it elsewhere, and then makking a great show o' religion that 'ud ha' saved all t' bother if it had been shown at t' raight time. That's not my soart o' duty and religion, I can tell you."

"You're heartless, Martha."



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"Happen I am. But off to bed with you. Yon's the church door; they're coming."

Ord needed no second warning. In an instant he was off. In passing, he looked into the room prepared for his mother. In the dusk he saw a book lying on the bed and he snatched it up and kissed it. His own door noiselessly closed after him.

The boy's talk with Baillie had added greatly to his excitement. He had made her describe minutely the appearance of his mother, narrate repeatedly every detail of their journey, until in his vivid imagination it had become as real as if he had taken part in it himself. His feeling towards the pale pathetic figure had become one of ardent, chivalrous affection, but from the actual opening of intercourse this only made him shrink the more. He had not begun to undress. When he heard his father's footstep he trembled excessively, and had scarcely voice enough to bid him come in. Mr. Brant again closed the door.

"Your mother approves of your reading this account of our past life," said the parson, as he put the paper into his son's hands. "I tell you frankly, Ord, that I wish you had been older, for, as you know from what I before said, the circumstances of my life are not quite ordinary ones. You hardly know anything of the different tides of life, so uniform has been our existence here. As I have always told you, your mother judges herself too harshly. I have tried to make plain in this statement how the mistake originated with myself. Had not your mother's life been diverted from its proper channel—in short, had she married a wealthy man—it would have kept an unruffled course. I need say no more. If there is anything you should want to ask me about, come fearlessly to me to-morrow. We have been com-

panions long enough to know something of each other's minds. Good-night, my boy. God bless you."

Unexpectedly the parson kissed the boy as he took his hand. This practice had fallen out of use for some years. Ord could say nothing. Nor did he immediately light his candle to read what his father had left.

For a time he abandoned himself again to his dreams.

Figures thronged them, but as he peered out into the late twilight now, all of them were still female, or if a male chanced to uprise it was in the act of tending or protecting a weaker companion; until suddenly the figure of his father crossed the scene. It passed in startling solitude. It obliterated all companions. It did not appear merely to be tending nobody, but all other figures actually fell away from it as unable to exist in its proximity. So actual did his father's presence seem, that Yordas thought it real, and put his head anxiously from the window. He could still easily distinguish objects about the house, but there was no human figure visible. Sandpipers still plaintively whistled some way off, perhaps disquieted by a prowling fox, but except from the ceaseless water there was not another sound. All the rest of earth and heaven was dumb and motionless. Some of the larger stars were out over the black hilltops; there was no cloud. So the boy was content; but still the presence of his father haunted him. He had scarcely before consciously examined his father. He was simply part of him. But now he shrank from that figure so impressively alone. The feeling troubled him, for all his filial devotion instinctively rose in revolt. It was as though some malign power was carrying off his father before his very eyes. He trembled and

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clenched his fingers. This crumpled the paper which he held, and the act aroused him.

"I'm half asleep," he muttered, and turning into the room struck a match.

Putting his chair by the candle he sat down to read what his father had left him.

## CHAPTER XII

### OUTLINES

THAT confession Yordas read and re-read for the greater part of the night, and although it was impossible for his boyish mind to comprehend it, the narrative strongly moved him. When at last he fell into a brief sleep, his brain continued its feverish activity in a still more exaggerated form. So with the first daylight he threw off his oppressive drowsiness and got up. He crept downstairs in his stocking-feet, and, when he had got his boots, unlocked the door noiselessly. A fresh west breeze was blowing, and it swept past him into the house like a first respiration of the awaking hills. One or two shy moorland birds that never ventured near man's dwelling in the eyes of day were startled in the yard by the untimely movements, and fled with a whistle of alarm to the heights. It was these that Ord first noticed, and watched until they were out of range, then he passed round to the front garden.

The place seemed new to him. He trod warily as on enchanted ground, cast his eyes timorously over the sleeping house. But it scarcely looked sleeping, for the blinds were at this time of year never drawn. Even more than this, frequently a window remained open to the fragrant air and the ceaseless lullaby of the water. So it was now. Yordas stopped. To his astonishment it was the window of that spare

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chamber which now yawned as wide as the sash allowed. That was strange. He moved directly in front of it, then stopped again; stood motionless, breathless, and stared.

He had been so haunted by spectral features throughout the night that he had at first known no astonishment. But as it slowly dawned upon him that the void of that open window actually framed a living face, to him a wondrous face, whose eyes seemed fixed immovably on his, a thrill passed through the whole frame of the boy to the very hair. It was then he stared.

In that other face, too, not a muscle, not an eyelash moved, nor had moved since first he caught sight of it. It was that statuesque, that lifeless rigidity, that had first stolen upon the lad with so solemn an effect. Then it was the form and appearance of the face itself. It was colourless, expressionless. Cheek was as white as forehead, lips at this distance as bloodless as the teeth they hid. Eyes and hair alone relieved the pallor. These were, or seemed to be, quite black. Yet the face was wonderfully beautiful. In shape it surpassed the outlines of Ord's dreams. Becoming conscious of his shameless stare, a flush of bashfulness came over him, and he turned quickly away.

But a sound arrested him and he looked back. The figure had moved and was leaning from the window. By a silent gesture of the hand it gave its meaning, and, trembling, the boy stayed. In a few moments the figure was beside him.

"You are Yordas. I—I— You know who I am."

The boy could not speak, but he looked. At the look a faint colour overspread the lady's face.

"You know who I am. You know all my wickedness to you and to your father."

"Father's account makes you unhappy but not

## CHAPTER XII

### OUTLINES

THAT confession Yordas read and re-read for the greater part of the night, and although it was impossible for his boyish mind to comprehend it, the narrative strongly moved him. When at last he fell into a brief sleep, his brain continued its feverish activity in a still more exaggerated form. So with the first daylight he threw off his oppressive drowsiness and got up. He crept downstairs in his stocking-feet, and, when he had got his boots, unlocked the door noiselessly. A fresh west breeze was blowing, and it swept past him into the house like a first respiration of the awaking hills. One or two shy moorland birds that never ventured near man's dwelling in the eyes of day were startled in the yard by the untimely movements, and fled with a whistle of alarm to the heights. It was these that Ord first noticed, and watched until they were out of range, then he passed round to the front garden.

The place seemed new to him. He trod warily as on enchanted ground, cast his eyes timorously over the sleeping house. But it scarcely looked sleeping, for the blinds were at this time of year never drawn. Even more than this, frequently a window remained open to the fragrant air and the ceaseless lullaby of the water. So it was now. Yordas stopped. To his astonishment it was the window of that spare

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"We'll be nowhere the day, Mr. Brant," observed Abram facetiously; but nobody else spoke.

Yordas was quite aware of the change in himself. In the last twenty-four hours he had become a youth. From vague flights and aspirations, his fervid imagination had at once flashed to a point. It seemed to him that in this beautiful, gracious mother his life had gained its only possible want.

Eleanor had that day also to herself for quiet contemplation, as the men only left work for their meals. She passed it in her room, looking out frequently at the figures, and indulging all the emotional visions that so suddenly overwhelmed her. She had returned home vanquished, lifeless; suddenly she had drunk a deep draught of recovered youth, almost of happiness.

When Ord went to wash and dress on ceasing work he had made up his mind. On coming downstairs he went straight to his father's study, but was checked by the sound of voices inside. He went to ask Martha who it was, and she said, "Gideon Thew from Bridgend." This astonished the boy, but still more so when the two men came out, and his father announced that his visitor was going to stay to supper. Under these circumstances Eleanor preferred to remain upstairs.

"Thew wants to attend our church," said Mr. Brant, when at last he and Ord were alone. "It is as I always thought, Ord. He seems a man of more than average piety. He has had some very sad trials in life."

"Like you, father," said the boy rather abruptly.

"Ay, far worse than mine. He had no laddie to help him."

"Please don't light the lamp, father. I can talk easier in the dark."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" And a brief silence fell.



Then the parson said something more about Thew ; just pointing out to his son how to regulate his conduct towards him. To deal in frank simplicity with the man ; not to betray in any manner that they regarded him differently from the other parishioners. Familiarity with homely people, said Mr. Brant, will do him a world of good, and gradually bring him the repose upon which alone any worthy life can be founded. Yordas listened impatiently to words which only betrayed the uneasiness they were intended to conceal. The reticent Brant temperament was here pitted against itself. The inevitable conversation was an outrage on the deepest instincts of both.

"I read your statement, father," ejaculated Ord at length. "Mother says it is like you, far too good ; far too favourable to her."

"That, my dear boy, we will not discuss," said the parson emphatically. "All I want is for you to understand my attitude. It must seem to you that I have cast her out, that I would not save her from such a dreadful experience at the cost of a little inconvenience to myself. That, I doubt not, is the world's opinion ; is it yours ? . . . It is ?"

"I haven't an opinion about it. What you did must have been right."

"If you can feel that, let it remain there until you are older. It is nothing less than a disaster that your mind should be troubled with such a question at your early age. But I know your difficulty. Your love goes out to your mother. You think that this must create a division between you and me ?"

"That is all I wanted to ask you," was the impulsive rejoinder. "It seems like deserting you. But am I ? Can't I love you both ?"

"You can, you do," exclaimed Mr. Brant again emphatically, eager only to compose the boy. "We shall live together here now. Divisions are no more.

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Your mother's wishes and aspirations are changed. She has accepted our life."

But it took a few weeks for the boy's excitement to subside. Having fully realised the susceptible temperament she had to deal with, Eleanor exercised over herself the most conscientious self-restraint, and this was of the utmost assistance to Yordas. Instances of this Mr. Brant observed frequently, and he flashed glances of gratitude to his wife which abundantly repaid her. Her own emotions were for the most part expended inside the church. At any hour of the day would she repair thither and immure herself for a considerable time in private devotion. Mr. Brant saw it, but made no remark. His company there she did not again ask on any unusual occasion.

Thus did Eleanor sink as it were into this wondrous life of repose to which she had at length fled for refuge. Appealing to it in despair, she had found there an unsuspected power of healing. She was content.

But neither she nor Mr. Brant was under any misapprehension. As regarded themselves, though in years scarcely past their youth, they at once knew that they were but reunited to the companionship of middle age. Tenderness and confidence sprang rather from profound emotions than from any of their earlier passions. Both knew that henceforth their life was not merged in one another, but in their boy. From any such confession, nay, from the vaguest hint, of course both shrank. They only once came at all near the subject, and that was on the first Sunday night as they watched Yordas setting Gideon Thew on his homeward walk down the valley.

"You are satisfied with him, Eleanor?" said Mr. Brant after the moment's silence.

"Satisfied! Oh, I could not have believed it pos-

sible!" cried the wife, with an artless betrayal of feeling which made her blush. As if to remove the effect, she quietly added, "You wish him to follow your calling?"

"There is no likelihood of that," replied Mr. Brant, and he drew his wife's attention to the hilltops.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT HOME

BUT there was a kind of tacit understanding at the parsonage that the essential life there, lay in the relationship between Yordas and his mother. Martha expressed her opinion freely. Of the parson's own emotions there was no evidence. Neither in face nor behaviour could anybody detect the slightest change. Although this reassured Yordas, and confirmed his father's words, he could not escape a sense of disloyalty in his new affection. He indulged it by stealth, and was unconsciously sustained in his impression by noticing the difference in his mother when with him alone and when they were in the presence of his father. But with use his uneasiness grew less.

One of its permanent results, however, was a scrupulous attention to all duties imposed by his father. No boyish laxity even in the most menial work had Mr. Brant now ever to overlook. In much of his own outdoor work he began frequently to find himself forestalled. Direct intercourse and confidence between the two, however, insensibly lessened.

Nor was Mr. Brant the only one affected by the new state of things. Ord's old friends at Redburnshank also knew the change. Except on Sunday at church Baillie seldom saw the boy. Although in the ordinary course of things their childhood's intercourse

was rapidly ending, its abrupt cessation was now naturally attributed by the girl to Mrs. Brant. This did not act favourably upon an already vague interpretation of the lady. In so happy and so confined a life there was not room for change. So Baillie began plainly to resent the intrusion.

But this was only at home. When she at length had an opportunity of complaining to Ord himself, she made no use of it. She felt him changed, and did not like to speak of what she was thinking. When they parted, Yordas thought that Baillie was different. Eleanor had seen the interview from her window and at once guessed the predicament. She talked to the boy about Baillie, expressed her wish to get to know her. But the girl was not amenable. She drew back still further when, the next Sunday night, Ord spoke of the wish of his mother. From that time she ceased even to bring down the butter to be sent, as had been the custom, with Mr. Brant's to the carrier. When the parson spoke to Abram about it, the latter laughed, confessed that Baillie was "scarry" of the lady. "But how do you get it down?" asked the clergyman. "Gideon aye takes it," was the reply. So the men agreed to leave it as it was for the time.

Mr. Brant told Yordas privately that Baillie was shy. The boy was annoyed, for Baillie had long been a customary confidant, and now that he had to some extent got used to his mother he wanted somebody to whom he could talk freely of her. In his difficulty he even made a companion of Thew. This the man seemed to welcome, and the two became very good friends.

It was as Mr. Brant had foreseen. A real change had come over Gideon Thew. He not only traversed the five miles between Bridgend and Harthope Church every Sunday, whatever the weather, but he was also

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one of the most regular and intelligent attendants at the parson's weekday evenings for sociable talk.

"Surely you'll tak' to whisky now, Gideon?" asked the irrepressible Gourlock one evening, after frankly commenting on the wheelwright's "conversion" and claiming it for the conviviality of Shilmerton Fair. "It's a' that's wanted to make a man of you."

Mr. Brant passed off the remark good-humouredly, and wholly at the expense of Abram, but afterwards he privately admonished the shepherd and forbade all such playful freedoms in future. "Some people find life a serious matter, Abram," said the parson in conclusion, "and do not measure its depth by their capacity for whisky. You, too, will come to see it in time."

But Gourlock's contempt for men who couldn't drink whisky freely was not to be easily shattered, for to him it was simply a part of physical prowess. Of course Mr. Brant was a parson, and so not a standard mortal; but for a common man to affect any such craven scruples betrayed some fatal degeneracy of breed. It has to be confessed for Thew that he did not act in this matter solely from excess of principle, so perhaps Abram's notion was right. It is true Gideon had lived near a fishing village, and had seen plenty of the reverse side of Gourlock's convivial shield, but it was not from that knowledge he acted. Thew simply disliked whisky, and, having never been sociably inclined, had not troubled to cultivate a companionable taste for it. But oddly enough, when he was next in Shilmerton, he bought a bottle and kept it at Bridgend. It was opened when Abram came down with the horse in response to a suggestion of Gideon's, at which time the wheelwright had also another surprise in store for his visitor.

"Didna I say sae?" exclaimed the shepherd bois-



terously, as, to his astonishment, he was bidden help himself. "This is tarr'ble like the thing, Gideon, my man. Bury the past, lad. Put away the time while ye have it, for the night cometh, ye ken. The world is the world, when aa's done, and we'll no' get a second chance at it I reckon. It'll be another sort o' ploy away yonder. Here's to our better acquaintance, man, and a brighter mornen' to you."

Gideon had prepared a glass for himself, and with a nod took the toast. Abram eyed him encouragingly, even tenderly.

"There noo! You'll feel better, I'se warr'nd. It's a drop o' good stuff, yon." And so they talked a while.

When Gourlock was preparing to leave, Thew ushered him out in a mysterious way, and called him aside.

"Will yon do?" he asked abruptly, with his finger to a brow new gig.

"Fine, man," returned the other carelessly.

"You thought it was done, but there's years of wear in it yet, if you'll only have a care of 'John Peel,'" said Gideon seriously. "A coat of paint does a deal."

"Ha'd away, man! You'll no' tell me yon's the aa'd gig," cried Abram ecstatically. "But I telled you to sell it just for kindling and waste iron. I canna pay you for a job like yon."

"I dinna want you to pay me," said Gideon irritably. "Just take it home and you'll hear no more about it."

Abram stared, then clutched his companion's arm. Finally he shook his head and said he couldna do that.

"Why not?"

"The labourer is aye worthy of his hire."

"Ay, but you paid me in advance. What you called my 'conversion' yon night has made a man of me. Do you think I can ever repay you for that?"



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And nothing would shake Gideon. He protested that clouds had rolled away from his soul from the moment the two women had set foot within his house after the accident, a deliverance which no amount of money could repay; but that if Abram was so anxious to set it off he had only to allow the speaker to come whiles to Redburnshank for a crack with him and his family.

"Come away, man, when you've a mind. We'll be aye blithe to see you," were Gourlock's parting words.

That a man, even late in the day, should extricate himself from such an unnatural state of life occasioned no surprise in the simple mind of Abram, and he thought no more of the matter. His more careful wife, of course, saw through it all. She said nothing at the time to her husband, but she immediately connected Thew's sudden alteration with her daughter Baillie. So she made it her duty henceforth to obtain every scrap of trustworthy evidence of the wheelwright's character, and in the meantime to keep a watchful mother's eye upon the man himself. And so the affairs of Harthope parish went on.

After a solitary week's break of tempestuous rain in August, autumn grew into a sunshiny fringe of summer, and the hills were long radiant beneath glorious skies. This favoured the communion of Yordas and his mother. With the lady's rapidly increasing health and vigour she rambled far in the boy's company, gaining intimate familiarity with his habits of mind and hearing with delight the stories he had to connect with every feature of the surrounding landscape. In the Priest's Cleugh they often sat, and laughed over the lawless pranks of former times. The spot itself was the most boldly picturesque in the parish, the smooth, round, grassy slopes breaking there into precipitous crag and the toddling burn into a

foaming torrent. Hawk and falcon would hover above, eyeing the intruders suspiciously, whilst homely kitty-wren would sing a blithe strain to them from a rock but a yard away. With life and scenes such as these Yordas seemed to have a sympathetic intimacy, and in his mother's presence he gave it full play.

"You should see Yordas How," she said to him a second time, and he looked at her quickly but no word came.

But the next time he gathered boldness, and got her to tell him of her country in return. This she seemed to do with some reluctance, adding, "Ask your father. It was he that revealed my own country to me." Mr. Brant had but seldom spoken of those former scenes, and Ord did not now find the courage to consult him. But he talked to Martha about it, and her conclusion always was that of course there was no county like Yorkshire, and the only place in it was Norgill. Always after a talk like this the boy would, before getting into bed, read again that statement of his father's, and each time, as he imagined, with additional light.

It was clear that his nature was developing rapidly those weeks. The progress was very apparent to Mr. Brant in his direction of the boy's studies, but he noted it silently. Although his life had been so deliberately secluded, his view of human nature was not a narrow one. Of this view he began to reveal more and more to his son directly, through the interpretation of their classical reading and pointed application of its spirit to their own pastoral life. Hitherto, of course, he had only shown the boy his philosophy at work—the face of his clock, so to speak—as though it were the one positive organisation of the universe. But now he felt it necessary to allow him glimpses of the works, of their relative

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position to the other varying activities that swayed the outside world.

Upon one of so much imaginative vigour as Yordas, all this sat lightly as yet, for the simple key to his existence was affection. In distinction to most boys of so mature age, no impulse towards an independent career had yet come to him. His local attachments were as strong as his personal, and it is hardly likely that he had ever for a moment associated his life with any wider scenes than these secluded fastnesses in which it now was passed. That this simplicity should have been sustained so long was perhaps due more to the fact of those scenes, under his father's guidance, having furnished ample nutriment to his various faculties than to any insensible acceptance of a familiar routine. Not to his son only, but to every one of his parishioners so far as each was capable, had Mr. Brant afforded similar food. He made his parish a comprehensive text, or rather a religious and educational storehouse, finding, for the behoof of his flock,

“tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

Yordas had apparently understood his father's attitude, more especially with regard to the romantic attributes of the locality. Upon these he would enlarge to his new companion Thew, and Gideon listened readily to the boy's enthusiastic talk, even turning it occasionally into channels for his own information.

One night as they were on their way the boy got on to his favourite topic of names. “You've a good name. Who are you called after?” he asked his companion.

The dour Gideon could not repress a laugh.

“Why, is everybody called after somebody?” he asked.

"Of course, they ought to be. It makes all the difference to their life."

Thew confessed he had never thought of that before.

"I'm called after a mountain in Yorkshire where my father used to live. It's really the best of all to be called after a mountain, for you never can want to be different from that. You can't be sure that even a hero is all you'd like him to be."

"Then who's your friend Baillie called after?" said Thew, indulging the boy's humour.

"Oh, don't you know? There's a tale about her name, but it's too long to tell you now. I must be turning back."

"It's not late," said Gideon. "You'll have the moon yonder in a few minutes."

Yordas agreed, and went on over the bridge where the waters joined.

"I can show you the gravestone next Sunday," said he. "And the strange part about it is that when this Baillie is twenty it will be exactly a hundred years since yon one died, and she was only twenty at the time. There's not been a Baillie Gourlock since till this, and, what's more, there's not even been another lass born at Redburnshank between them. Abram's other bairns are boys."

"How came the first lass to die so young?" demanded Gideon, in a singularly stern tone which the boy misunderstood.

"You don't believe me; you think I am making it up. But I'm not."

Thew corrected him, and bade him go on.

"She was killed. It was terrible. She was the bonniest lass between Cheviot and Kielder, and a lot of men wanted to marry her. But she wouldn't look at one of them, she was so proud. It was this that enraged them all. If she had chosen one, nobody would have dared to harm her. But, as it was, one

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of them called John Hall, from Rede Water, laid a plot to carry her off and make her marry him. Towards dark one evening, just after Martinmas, word came to Redburnshank that the parson at Harthope was dying and wanted badly to see Daniel Gourlock before he went. It was stormy, but he came away straight, leaving Baillie by herself in the house. She hadn't been long before there was another knock, and as she opened the door only the wind and sleet drove in beside her. She could see, but nobody was there. So she sat down again. In a minute or two the knock came again, louder than before, and, as she was afraid of nothing, Baillie opened the door to it. Of course it's not really known, but I'm quite sure myself that as she stood looking into the murky wet the villain seized her from behind and got her hands tied before she could use the pistol that she always carried about her. She wouldn't skirl, for that was not Baillie's way. Daniel Gourlock found that the parson was hearty and had not sent for him at all. So then he knew. He went back in an awful state. The parson went with him, and two or three more from that ruined house by the bridge, that was standing then. It came on to snow, but they sought all night. It was not till morning that they found her, drowned against a stone of the Whitlees Ford. The man was never heard of again."

"Poor lass, poor lass!" muttered Thew in great agitation.

"Ay, they were fearsome times, yon. I must be off. Good-night."

Before Gideon could interrogate him further the boy was gone.

As the moon was clearing the hill-shoulder down the valley, Thew sat down to contemplate the scene and the story.



## CHAPTER XIV

### CROSS THREADS

**B**UT it was before the next Sunday that Ord had an opportunity of showing his new friend the gravestone of which he had spoken. Only two days later, Thew appeared at the parsonage about mid-day, having some work, as he said, for the squire at the West Wood, a great fir plantation just behind the inner hill. The boy chanced to be mowing bracken on the slope behind the house, and as it was nearly his own dinner-time he went down to meet Gideon.

The day was oppressively hot, the hills basking in haze, and white clouds above them floating indistinctly and lazily over the pale sky. Yordas knew that his mother was in the church, and as he passed it he glanced at the door which stood ajar. Thew, who was by this time also close to the churchyard, seemed to notice the gesture.

"Is anybody inside?" he asked.

Contrary to his life-long habit, Yordas lied. "Not that I know of," he replied.

They went to the Gourlock gravestone, which was at the east end, Gideon talking, but the boy unusually silent. In order to decipher the necessary part of the inscription near the bottom they had to lie prostrate in the grass. Having pointed out the words, Ord raised himself on his knees, and looked

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down at his companion eagerly scanning the sad record. "'Found drowned at the Whitlees Ford,'" muttered Gideon as he read, "'on the morning of 14th Nov. 1765, by her sorrowing father. 'God distributeth sorrows in his anger.' Job xxi. 17.' . . . Ay, ay," he continued, in strange agitation, "that's just what happened to her." Then he was silent for a minute or two, and as he got up the boy noticed that there were tears in the wheelwright's eyes.

"Happened to who?" asked Yordas in astonishment, but as he put the question there was a sound from the harmonium in the church.

Under Thew's quick look Ord's face turned crimson. "I knew she was in," he confessed immediately, "but I didn't want to tell you."

"Who?"

"My mother."

The state of mind of each was a complete mystery to the other, so the mutual stare continued for a moment whilst the music went on.

"You tell me first," said Yordas at last, with a frankness that displayed nearly all the simplicity of boyhood still.

"Not now. Can you come over to the West Wood this afternoon? I'm putting up the wire fencing along the top dike. I shall not leave till dark."

"Ay, perhaps I'll come." And Yordas gladly escaped.

Every afternoon Mr. Brant allowed his son three hours complete freedom. This was frequently spent in a joint ramble, or pastoral visit to some of the scattered abodes. Whilst they sat at dinner to-day, Martha abruptly entered and said the lad had come down from Whitlees Hope to know if Mr. Brant could go yonder that afternoon.

"Is it Dave?" asked the clergyman, getting up to



go and see the boy. He was absent a few minutes, then came back and resumed his place.

"I think old Harriet has at last received her call," he observed. "Shall we walk that way this afternoon, Ord?"

"Yes, father."

The West Wood lay on the way, and the boy told of his conversation with Gideon. A few minutes later they set off.

The messenger had also gone on to Redburnshank on his way, old Harriet and Abram Gourlock's mother being sisters. But Abram was away for some sheep, so Baillie was sent to Whitlees Hope in his stead.

She could have saved a mile by going by Harthope, but she chose the longer way up the Aller burn. Mr. Brant was already there when Baillie reached her destination. It proved impossible for the old woman to see her, so having accomplished her errand, the girl turned away for home. She traversed the wide open tract of Three Stone Gair, dipped into the crease filled with birch trees, and then mounted the brae above which could be seen the dark plumes of the fir wood. On reaching the corner of this, just over the summit, she stood like a fawn to throw a glance about her, and the next moment with a start she plunged into the wood. Screened wholly by the undergrowth of dwarf birch and bracken, Baillie crouched to watch expectantly. In her cramped position the time seemed long, and she was about to come impatiently from her concealment to give another look, when the sounds for which she had waited struck her ear. As the footsteps rustled along the pathway she peered out, watched the figure of Yordas not ten yards away, criticised the very expression of his face. He turned down the track by which she had just come, and she ventured

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forward. When he had crossed the ridge behind which Whitlees Hope lay she resumed her journey. She seemed vexed. In her hand she had a frond of bracken which she was pulling to bits. Then she threw the stump away.

The track lay along the upper dike of the West Wood, turning presently through a gateway into the wood itself. The gate was unhinged, and on the ground beside it was lying a bag of workman's tools, with chips and other indications of active work around. But nobody was to be seen or heard. When she had satisfied herself of this, Baillie took up an axe and, burned upon the haft, she saw the initials *G. T.* She cast her eyes again about her, and then caught a sound other than the droning of the flies. It was a human voice. On listening intently, the girl could tell it was engaged in very eager talk. It continued, but always in the same tone. The words could not be distinguished, but it seemed that there was no reply. The solemnity of the trees, the trunks where the hazy sun touched them being turned to red granite, suggested church to Baillie, and now, as she stepped cautiously forward, the voice irresistibly suggested the preacher. After a few more paces she caught one word thrillingly uttered, and the suggestion was confirmed. Now she could not turn back.

Walking noiselessly over the carpet of crowberries and deep moss, and avoiding the stiff fern, she went in the direction of the sound. This presently brought her within sight of an open space amidst the trees into which the sun poured, and where three or four trunks lay uprooted. At the foot of a stately pine, which rose up like a great ship's mast, knelt Gideon Thew, alone. Baillie had for some time known that he was absorbed in prayer. He had thrown his hat aside, and the girl had taken the precaution to

approach from the side to which his back was turned. She heard some of the petitions, but this was not for what she had come. Her curiosity was satisfied and she turned away. But, with a smile, a mischievous impulse seized her, and, stepping boldly into the open, she snatched up Gideon's hat, and hung it on the highest branch she could reach on tiptoe. Then she disappeared, the voice again dying behind her into one of the natural sighs of the wood.

Baillie was not irreverent, but only young, and had of course only received the training of the Established Church under the lax discipline of Mr. Brant. Nothing surprised her now in regard to Gideon Thew, so her mind quickly reverted to Yordas. Petulance was dying away, and she was getting wretched over the breach in their old companionship. All her radiant intercourse with the parsonage came back to her now with the glow of a vanished existence. She reached home in a fretful state, but that night resolved to make another attempt to win back at least a portion of the past.

Yordas had kept his appointment with Gideon, and had as a reward added another tragic story to his stock. In view of the gravity of their intercourse Thew seemed to ignore the disparity of their years. He even told his woes to the boy more unreservedly than he had done some time before to the father, as if encouraged by the lad's kindling eye. The burden of it was this. After long unsuccessful wooing, Gideon had obtained the affections of a fisher lass upon whom the whole of his heart was fixed. Even the wedding day had been at last appointed, when an evil fate had interposed and blighted the whole of his cherished hopes. A few weeks before the day, Gideon had met a stranger at an inn where he was staying for a night, and formed an acquaintance with him. Thew admitted that he

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had felt a presentiment upon his first word with the man, but ignored it. The significance of the omen, however, was very soon plain. They attended a fair together, and from that day the attitude of his betrothed was altered. The genteel stranger had bewitched the maid. A time of tragical disquiet followed, of which even Gideon could not now speak, but "like yon Baillie you told me of," he concluded quietly, "on the morning that was to have been the one of our marriage, I myself found her body on the beach beside a stone, after wandering all night there, and the man we heard no more of. A long piece of seaweed had twined itself round her neck. I kept that."

"But what had happened?" Yordas had demanded, his unsatisfied interest in the story quenching all consideration for his sensitive companion.

"I canna tell you, except that they had been out together in a boat the night before. She could manage a cobble like any man."

The narrative had been given with calm seriousness, as if time and resignation had soothed the agony, so that it was with a shock of astonishment that Yordas heard the outburst that followed it. Not a howling tornado suddenly hurling its deafening roar through the quiet wood about them could have surprised him more completely.

"That's the blast that came like a snell northeaster over my soul," said Gideon, "and turned all the buds of a springtime into the blackness of winter and death. My whole soul lay drowned with yon maiden that had been stolen from me. I couldna understand it. If there is a God it must have been a stroke from His hand that did it. It was by His permission anyway. It was another blow of His at me. He'd been always against me. Oh, lad, I was in the dark. Ay, ay, God distributeth sorrows in



His anger. I've had nothing but sorrows from the first snowy day that I can bring to mind, and that was my mother's funeral. Perpetual sorrows must mean perpetual anger. There's the Book for it. I'm damned, lad,—damned from the beginning for here and hereafter."

"Hush, Gideon!" exclaimed Yordas with startling firmness. "No man is damned for sins he has not himself committed. What do you make of God if you make Him capable of things like yon? Haven't you heard my father say a hundred times that the circumstances of this world are no witness to the judgments of God? We cannot read them."

"Ay, ay, I must learn that, my dear lad," said the other, clutching Ord's hand. "But it's hard, it's awful hard. I cannot get rid of the pride of life, of the masterfulness of the human judgment. But I'll learn. Dinna think that I'm always like I was just now," continued the man, almost in a tone of contrition. "Yon was a bit of the old clouds. I'm learning. If I had but kenned your father earlier I'd have done better. But I'll win through. You mind the night your mother came back and had to stay at the Bridgend. . . . Ay, I'll tell you, but you must no' speak of it, not even to your father. The next day I was away to *her* grave by the sea yonder, and I got back my troth. I'll win through. Think nothing of what I said just now. I have a glint of light. I'll win through."

A few minutes later Yordas was on his way to Whitlees Hope to meet his father. It was at the end of the wood that it first struck him his own confession had not been made, so engrossed had they been in Gideon's affairs. This led him on to the subject of his mother and the lie he had told. For the first time it flashed upon him, in explanation, that he was ashamed of his mother's devotions in the church, and

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he could not throw the matter from his mind. It was the first glimpse of his mother from the outside, so to speak, that his ardour had permitted him since her return. His youthful sensibility found in it an instinctive regret, even humiliation. Any criticism of what his enthusiasm held sacred gave him a sting, whilst it unconsciously left his boyhood one step farther behind.

Gideon was again calmly at work when Yordas and his father passed him some time later, and after a brief talk they went on.

The next morning, on his beat by the Wether Cairn, Yordas picked the first ripe noop and ate it. Then he sat down on the stones.

Parsonside and the lands of Redburnshank met at the Wether Cairn, and ran side by side along the ridge of the mountain. Up there it was boggy peat-land from which the fuel was regularly cut for the winter, but also over a great part of the surface amidst heather and grass the noops grew. Redburnshank was renowned for its noop jam, a delicacy of which even Mr. Brant greatly approved. So through all their childhood gathering the noops in autumn had been a regular thing with Yordas and the children of Redburnshank. It took the place of the blackberry harvest in other more favoured regions beyond the hills.

But the edge of the pleasure was keener in these upland wastes, since it was brief and seldom, and, with the exception of the berries in the garden, their only crop. Even the blaeberries could not be had in any quantity within a distance of several miles. The flavour of the first noop, therefore, aroused many memories in Ord as he took his seat, and it seemed quite in keeping with them that Baillie should appear instantly before him, as if out of the ground.

"Where have you come from?" laughed he.

"From behind the cairn."

"I never saw you."

"I didn't mean that you should." And at once the girl chose a comfortable stone beside him. She was resolved. "They'll not be ready for another week. I suppose you won't come and pick them this year."

"Why not?"

"Because your mother has come home."

"And what difference should that make?"

"It has made a great deal," said Baillie, with a little pout.

Yordas affected to be astonished, but then he agreed.

"Yes, of course it has. But it'll make no change in those things. I shall bring her too."

Baillie's face fell.

"Don't you want me to? Don't you like her?" asked Ord in the utmost surprise. "It's you that are different, Baillie."

"It's not her I dinna like," stammered Baillie. "But it'll not be the same. I'm shy I suppose. I'm shy even with you now."

The tone of half child and half bashful girl was very pretty in Baillie's frankness, and Yordas seemed to notice the difference of it. But he only laughed at what he took for his companion's playfulness.

"Ay, that's likely," said he ironically.

As Baillie did not immediately take up the subject, Ord burst forthwith into a fervent panegyric of his mother. He drew all the tenderness and beauty which he found in her in such glowing colours, betrayed so unreservedly all his own chivalrous, passionate affection for her, and confessed so eloquently his own determination to make up to her all the years of dark suffering she had endured, that Baillie was startled, and, without knowing it, deeply blushed. Through their life-long intercourse



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he had never caused her a thrill of this sort. It passed instantly, and she ardently proclaimed her love for his mother. She had been wrong, unkind, everything. They talked for quite half an hour longer, mainly on the same topic, and when Yordas said that he must go it was eagerly agreed that Mrs. Brant should be of their party. They smiled to each other and parted. Baillie went home in quite a new mood and with an entirely new source of contemplation.

Yes, the spell which had been troubling her for weeks was broken. The old companion had been revealed to her in all his charm, even with an added radiance that more than dispersed the obscurity between. Yordas, too, had found relief through his enthusiasm. He would not soon criticise his mother again.

## CHAPTER XV

### FORTUNE-TELLING

YORDAS took three noops home, and with them in his palm held out his hand to his mother at the dinner-table. She took one and Mr. Brant took another.

"Do you know what they are, mother?"

She nodded and blushed.

The fruit resembled a red blackberry or raspberry formed of a few large knobs. The three were eaten silently and all eyes were raised.

"They are cloudberryes," said the mother.

"They grow on the top of Yordas How," observed the parson. And all that the boy could add was the quiet exclamation, "Oh!"

But Mr. Brant took up the conversation, and they talked of the expedition which Ord had planned.

On the following Sunday Baillie was apprised of the day they had fixed, and she awaited it eagerly. Scarcely known to herself, Baillie had of late been constructing a new life of her own as a result of the change brought about in the parish by the altered life at the parsonage, and this had the most unexpected effect on the renewal of old ties. She knew that formerly it was gathering the noops that was the source of her excitement in anticipation of this day, but now she was perfectly aware that all the attraction lay in the promised revival of intercourse

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with Yordas. Only the day before the one appointed, this fact was brought clearly home to her mind. She had been sent to Whitlees Hope again, and passed by the West Wood. She again saw the signs of working, and, almost before she was aware, had come upon Gideon Thew. His head appeared suddenly above the dike as she was passing. The man offered almost a jocular greeting, such a thrill did the sight of her send through his frame.

"But I didn't come to see you," was Baillie's arch reply.

"Perhaps to make fun of me."

With perfect self-command she glanced a question at him, but he did not remove his eyes.

"When did I make fun of you?"

"Nobody but you passed this wood last Thursday about four o'clock. Yordas had just left me. I don't know how you missed him."

Baillie was no great adept at dissimulation, so this brought the colour to her face, and Gideon quivered with joy.

"It must have been you, lassie, so remember your faults this day."

"Did he tell you that I passed this wood at four o'clock?"

"No, he told me nothing about it, for I didna ask him. I got at it another way. You canna deny it."

"Deny what?"

"That you turned my agony to sport; that you mocked a lonely soul with childish laughter," said Thew, with that sudden burst of stern seriousness to which his mind seemed subject.

The girl looked with dismay, not understanding such severity.

"Did you ever read a story about boys throwing stones at frogs? What was sport to the laddies was

death to the frogs. It's very much like that to me, Baillie, when you make fun of me."

"Is it?" she said, scarce consciously.

"In one way it's worse. You can only be killed but once, but you can be stung by unkindness a hundred times."

"Not by me, Mr. Thew," said the girl resolutely. "I'll never do it again. I didn't mean to be unkind to you."

She turned away to continue her journey, and Gideon was over the wall and by her side in an instant. His was the repentance now, and in a gentle way he expressed his regret; confessed that he knew she did not mean to injure him; begged her not to be afraid of him, to make fun of him again, to forget all that he had said.

But none the less Baillie was afraid of him, simply because she did not understand him. When he had turned back and she was crossing the bent alone, without conscious reflection her whole soul craved for the hand of Yordas. In fancy she was beside him at the cairn in the morning sun as two or three days ago, and in closing her own fingers they seemed to close upon his hand. In this imaginary companionship she reached Whitlees Hope with a sense of security. At the expense of an extra two miles she went back another way.

This particular sense of companionship, of brotherhood, in Yordas she had never known before, perhaps because she had never in the same way known its need. It rose with her in the morning as part of the sunlight of the day. In going out early she scanned the sky carefully to read what that day was to be. Thick clouds were just breaking, and a dark rolling mist which had enveloped everything was being driven from the north-west, but looking southwards to the cairn Baillie saw that all that sky was clear, and, as

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she watched, the sun broke above the tumbling mist full and warm, in sudden contrast with the dark chill of a moment before.

"Ay, lass, it'll be a good day," observed Abram, seeing her gaze; and so it proved.

They were to meet about ten o'clock at the Wether Cairn. Arriving there purposely a good half hour before the time, Baillie took a seat upon the stone on which she had found Yordas a few days ago, and she contemplated the ranks of steep round hills clustered about her. Scattered amongst the coarse grass in front she could see the fruit which they had come to gather, one berry only on each stalk, and that so short as to be for the most part hidden by the grass. With a fluttering heart she at length watched the two figures mounting by the track which she knew they would take, and when Yordas waved his hand she blushed deeply, but fortunately they were too far off to see. When they got up to her she could command herself better, and her joy only radiated from the ordinary bloom of her cheeks and a couple of lustrous eyes. Mrs. Brant took the liberty of kissing her, and said some pretty words to put Baillie at her ease. Then they all sat down again and talked of the prospect around.

There was a playful frankness in Eleanor that surprised even Yordas. She led him on to gossip about the hills, in which he was rich and enthusiastic, getting him to name them all to her in order and give each its story. To Baillie, too, the lady appeared in a wholly new light. It was difficult for the girl to believe that this was the same pale, dejected, even lifeless woman that had passed the night at the Bridgend, and whom she had examined so carefully in church ever since. It was not until midday, when they sat down to their lunch, that any change in Eleanor was apparent. Up to then she had treated



Baillie as a child, had decked her hair with heather and garlands of berries, christened her the Noop Fairy, the Spirit of the Fell, and scattered about her such a play of delicious fancy as wholly to transform the familiar aspect of his playmate to Yordas himself.

When they had ended their simple repast, without preface or warning, Mrs. Brant broke into a quiet plaintive song, the first note of which riveted the eyes of her two companions upon her face in an artless gaze which continued unchanged, immovable, until the voice had done. Then, as by magic, the two pairs of eyes flashed simultaneously upon each other in glad surprise. Yordas was the first to break into words of rapturous delight. The emotion which he felt was new to him, ravishing as strange. Baillie's eyes again rested on him, not moving whilst he spoke. From this moment there seemed to come over Eleanor a subtle change.

For the rest of the time that they were together there, it was not difficult for Baillie to recognise again her mysterious companion of the Bridgend. But this did not affect her. This singular apparition was but the mother of Yordas, an impersonal light merely by which the full radiance of that familiar figure had been first revealed. Through instinctive emotion only did Baillie see and breathe during the hour or two that followed. In Yordas there was no change. He for her shone steadfast as the sun in that unclouded sky.

When at last they parted down opposite sides of the hill Baillie only pretended to go home. After lingering in a peat hole she returned to the cairn, and sat there through the whole of the afternoon. The spot fascinated her, and she seemed afraid of leaving it lest the new birth of her soul should fade and vanish also in an altered scene. That sweet

voice and plaintive song lingered with her in the heat, a rare ethereal note which could only withstand the whisper of this lonely breeze or the fairy organ-swell of a wandering fly, and which she dreaded to lose in the harsh clatter of the life at home.

Under the plea of fatigue Eleanor soon withdrew to her chamber; and certainly she reclined on the bed, but in her eyes there was no repose. As was usual, her window remained open, and across the opposite patch of hillside it might have seemed that ceaseless scenes of activity were flitting to keep her faculties engaged. As soon as her mind was agitated like this, her face took the restless haggard expression with which she had come back to Harthope, and which had been since removed. At every sound of her son's or husband's voice outside she started with fright. She got up from her bed to the chair; removed from the chair to her bed again. When all was quiet, and she knew that Yordas would have gone for the cow, she escaped to the church. Here she remained for a long time on her knees. When she arose, it was with an impulsive nervous movement. She moved about the little building uneasily. Apparently she had not found the balm she was in the habit of finding. She began even to speak abruptly and aloud.

"He must not have this to suffer. . . . It will be just the same. Even now she loves him without knowing what she does. But he—no, I can yet save him. In *that* he is a boy. He loves me only." As she said this, more quietly, and more firmly, she became silent again and looked at a white tablet on the wall. Her eyes instantly fell on the words, "As a mother she was tender, self-sacrificing, and firm." They seemed to arrest her, and for some time with her hands behind her she gazed at them intently. In a minute or two Eleanor went out.



She resolved to confide all to her husband. His behaviour to herself had shown more than candour. He would understand her fear. If once Ord's familiarity was allowed to flash into love his life would be wrecked. With this determination she returned to the house. But by the evening her courage had vanished. All Mr. Brant's imperturbable calm oppressed her. Memories of old conversations rose like ghosts to daunt her. In him she could not confide.

After the day's enjoyment Yordas was in high spirits. The concord between his mother and Baillie removed a cloud of which he had been dimly conscious. With thoughts of it he whistled cheerfully as he came from his last duty out of doors, and was hurrying to the parlour for the glorious evening talk when he collided with Eleanor in the twilight. He laughed and snatched her hand.

"Come down to the bridge and see the moon rise, mother," cried he.

"It's just what I was going to propose."

And together they went off down the stream. On the way Yordas did all the talking. This suited his mother well, for his frank, artless vivacity at first calmed her nerves, and then exalted her spirits to the height necessary for what she had in hand. It was a lovely night, and this fired the youth's imagination. He seemed to require no topics but those about him.

"I always think of you as a stag that can talk," remarked his mother at one point.

"Or a sheep," laughed Yordas.

"Oh no, you are a noble animal. I meant a compliment, not a reproach."

"What can be better?"

"Do you think you will always feel so? Alas, you can't always be a boy."

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"I think I feel pretty much like father, and he has not always been a boy."

"But he is a clergyman, and he says that it is not at all likely you will be one."

"Did he? What did he say I should be?" asked Yordas eagerly.

"We didn't get so far as that," laughed the mother. "No doubt he thought it lay with you."

"And what do you think I shall be, mother? Tell me my fortune."

"Wait till the moon's up. I can't see your face, nor even your hand, in this light. I hope it will be a joyous one, dear boy. It ought to be. You have strength, you have manhood. I should fear for you if you were a girl."

"But surely girls have happy fortunes."

"Some, I hope."

"Poor darling mother," said Yordas ardently, emboldened by the dusk. "But even your fortune has come right in the end."

"In the end, Yordas? It was always so far, far better than I deserved. Where it failed was only in my own worth, in my own dignity and nobility of character."

"I can't believe that. Father never suggests such a thing."

"That is his goodness. He must feel it. All the joy, all the beauty, all the goodness of the world is contemptible to him."

"Do you think so?" cried Yordas, with a start.

"It must be so, for he fled from it. To me it is—was the breath of life."

The youth, trembling, sought his mother's hand, and went on some paces, silently, holding it.

She seemed surrounded by a halo of dazzling, alluring light. His father's figure receded in the shade. As they reached the corner where the valley

turned, the moon appeared high in the sky, and they both stopped.

"Now you can see me," cried Yordas.

He was again thrilled by the gaze of his mother's eyes as she fixed them on his face. She drew her hand over his brow and down the right cheek. She seemed to hesitate an instant, but then she spoke.

"Since I first set eyes on you from my window in that morning light," she said solemnly, "I have known that your fortune is the highest, the noblest that can fall to man. Every generous impulse dwells in you. Every human achievement is possible to you. You will see and realise all the glory of the active world. Goodness you will combine with refinement, with art, with learning, and with song. What higher fortune, boy, can you hope for than this? It is all yours."

"All that you have failed to obtain, mother?" said the boy fervently.

The woman received a shock at this utterance of the very words that were throbbing in her soul, of the hopes from which her divination sprang.

"All that," she said, and folding her son to her bosom she pressed his cheek long and silently against her own.

"And you shall have it," he whispered in her ear.

They talked but little on their way home as the moon mounted higher.

One more struggle Eleanor made. The next morning she was seized with remorse at what in remembrance came as a treacherous stab at her husband. But that one day cured it. With renewed hope, with renewed conviction of success, all the ambitions and aspirations of her life swelled irresistibly through her mind, and brought with them persuasions of duty, of devotion to her boy. "Tender, self-sacrificing, and firm." She liked those words.

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After a long imaginary contest with Mr. Brant, she fell asleep that night with the reflection, "He may be mistaken as well as I. I will do it."

From that time Yordas found a welcome change in his mother. She was content with the religious ordinances of other people, and he had not again to blush for her private visits to the church. A healthy vivacity and freedom from constraint marked her intercourse with him, and even with his father. With the quick perception of youth, he saw that her eyes did not so frequently fall in discussions at the table. This strengthened his own chivalrous devotion to her. She slipped into his ideal of the race, and to bring a ray of gladness to her eyes awakened the keenest joy he knew of. He questioned, and she freely disclosed the pleasures of civilised life beyond the hills. Yordas had been kept in no rigid ignorance of all this, but from his mother's mind it acquired a new, an unsuspected radiance, which transfigured it to his own. For the first time he felt and actually realised a music beyond the birds and waters, art other than the glory of sun and cloud, and poesy more abstract than the blunt exuberance of heroic ages.

The immediate obvious outcome of all this was that when the parishioners met at the parsonage for their sociable evenings under the October moon they found a piano established in the parlour for their entertainment. They were at first startled, but in the hands of Mrs. Brant it became a source of power. Baillie began again to come down with her father, and under the spell of Eleanor's song even Abram one evening admitted privately to Gideon Thew that the parson had found a terrible good substitute for whisky.



## CHAPTER XVI

### REFRAINS

ELEANOR could both play and sing well, as Mr. Brant was keenly reminded through the following winter months. Frequently as he sat engrossed in his study, the sounds of music came to him from the room opposite, and it always caused him immediately to lay down his pen. His wife's taste was refined and intellectual, and some of the effect of it was communicated to himself as well as to Yordas. Old visions returned to him under the subtle influence, and he would contemplate in a singularly placid spirit whole tracts of his nature that lay fallow and untilled, needs of his imaginative youth that had faded into dreams. Occasionally he went across to the other room and stood silently by the mantelpiece.

"We disturb you?" his wife had cried at first at these intrusions.

"No, go on," the parson would reply with a head-shake.

So now his entrance was made in silence without any interruption to what was going on. He did not actually stay long, and Yordas began to construe the action as a tacit recognition merely of their pursuit. It seemed to him a characteristically delicate way of his father's to put them at their ease, and remove any appearance of constraint on either part. But the old

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housekeeper Martha was extremely irritated by the proceedings. She talked bluntly to anybody of the sight of a Christian parsonage being turned into a show-house, that it was just as *she* had gone on before, and that they'd see. Yordas, who was still a child to her, she upbraided bitterly to his face.

"Cannot you see, lad, that you're bre'king your father's heart by such goings on?" she expostulated on one such favourable occasion. "Is he to have brought you up to this age all for nowt? And is yon woman just to step in when all t' work's done and tak' you off into t' frivolities that have made a mess of her own life and of iverybody else's about her?"

But she under-estimated the spirit she had now to deal with, and in a vehement passion the young man forbade her to insult his mother, and for his part he would no longer listen to a word she had to say on the subject.

"Ay, that's it," was the imperturbable rejoinder. "You'll go on until you bre'k your own heart as well as your father's, and then you'll do. Well, dunnot come to me to give you comfort, so I tell you. You'll find none."

Yordas really did avoid the woman in future, for, however he resented her plain criticisms, he found that her words had a singular power of making him uneasy despite their absurdity and palpable falseness as regarded his father. More than once he resolved to shatter her malign influence over him by a direct appeal to his father, but he could never manage to carry it out. Intimate confidences had so insensibly died away between them, that, without some very pronounced assistance from the elder, Ord found it impossible to bring them back to life. But he paid more and more heed to appearances, and these continued all on his side.

Things, however, advanced so rapidly that winter



that Martha's indignation overstepped all bounds, and one night she went for a private interview with the parson. He at once saw by her face that her feelings ran high.

"I've been with you twenty years, Mr. Brant, but I'll stay no longer. I'm going home. You're fair daft."

"How have I offended you, Martha?" asked the clergyman, with a smile.

"I heard your talk at dinner. Is it true that you're going to send the lad to Edinburgh?"

"Yes, it is almost decided."

"Well, isn't that enough? I've seen you through one breakup, but I'll not see you through another."

"I myself studied at Durham. Why should he be denied similar advantages if he asks for them?"

This tone took the woman aback, but she wouldn't show it.

"Because it's none of his own asking," she said firmly. "He's just a bit o' putty in the hands of his mother, and if she tells him to set the byre ablaze he'll do it. They'll bre'k your heart between 'em. It's no use telling you to be selfish, but no man has more right to bre'k his own heart than he has to bre'k his neck."

"Your kind heart has deceived you, Martha. The boy's life is now his own. My own influence, if it has been for good, can never die. The time has now come for it to be tested by other influences. How simple a thing our life would be if it could be passed in one unbroken channel, if we could keep a beautiful ideal of our hearts a reality of every day! But upon such a law we have not been made. All that those who have the responsibility of moulding a young life can hope to do is to shape it round a germ of peace. If that is accomplished, Martha, it will ultimately triumph over all the surface agitations of the world.

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Waves may break, nay, must break against it, even over and submerge it, but the germ is hidden, not lost. I assure you the great trial of a parent's life is to believe, to trust to, this. To subdue, to crush all one's own selfish cravings," continued Mr. Brant with heightening fervour; "to hide from a child all excessive affection that may restrain or stunt *his* nature under guise of developing it. *We* cannot tell what one individual life requires. Do you think I wouldn't give my own life to save his from any anguish? When do you wish to leave me?"

The silence of the study and the hills was for a moment unbroken. As the parson looked up he saw a tear fall from the eyes of his censorious recalcitrant dependant, but she turned quickly and it was hidden.

"Nay, you cap all that ivver I saw. I'll go back to my work for a bit." And the door closed silently after Martha.

But Mr. Brant could not resume his work that night. From a profound *rêverie*, not half an hour later, he was aroused by a tap at the door, and Yordas entered. The youth came in freely at all times, and had always done so, whatever the employment of his father. Now he stood in the doorway, hesitating to come farther. He had never surprised his father in such an attitude before. Mr. Brant was reclining against the mantelpiece, without book or paper in his hand, and, before it was raised in greeting, his face had borne a singularly aged look. The suddenness of his son's entrance had prevented the parson's making the alteration he would have wished without some unbecoming abruptness being noticed. Of course his aspect changed at once, but what had given Yordas the shock was that in that instant he seemed to see his father in his Norgill study alone on the blustering night when he first discovered his wife's departure.

When the youth had shut the door, he came forward and said, "Father, I shan't go."

"Tut, tut, my lad," returned the parson, smiling. "Beware of impulses however generous. Not to go would thwart not merely an impulse but a tendency of your life which has been growing, and might destroy the very tenderness that now makes you hesitate. It might embitter your life and turn the affection which prompts this action into a source of endless regret. It might seem later that love for me had narrowed instead of expanding your life. Neither I nor you would be the gainer by such a calamity. The trial of separation is infinitely preferable, isn't it? Let us talk."

However long the intervening silences, and however estranged Yordas may have felt a moment before, the immutable calm of his father's tone and current of reflection always spanned the gap in an instant. They sat down and had an hour's open-hearted conversation. It had all the effect of a religious confession and absolution on the youth. The harassing sense of secrecy, of doubtful dealing, left him, and he breasted that passionate love for his mother and all that it involved with redoubled vigour. From this moment their plans were confirmed.

That was in March. It was resolved that a month later Yordas should take his departure. In preparation for the move, Mr. Brant made a journey to Edinburgh to make the necessary arrangements, and to select a home to which the youth might be transferred for such time as he should be engaged with his studies. It was the first visit to the active world that the parson had made for some years, and the city of Edinburgh he had never before seen, although from his reading he had some familiarity with its features. But he conducted himself in a very matter-of-fact way. He carried only an umbrella and a rusty

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leather hand-bag, both relics of former years, and on alighting from the train early in the afternoon, with both these articles clutched tightly in one hand, he sought immediately the summit of the Calton Hill. There he reflected and laid his plans.

From this general survey he descended, and by further inquiry found out a street, the name of which he had in mind. He looked at the general aspect of the street, critically viewed the houses, and stopped at length before a certain number. Here he knocked and waited. There was no response to his summons, so he repeated the knock.

The door was at length opened, and a middle-aged woman looked out. The two eyed each other for a moment, and with a smile Mr. Brant walked in. Neither spoke until they were shut in the parlour. Letters they had exchanged, but the brother and sister had not met for upwards of twenty years.

"Why, you're not changed a bit, Anthony."

"We must talk before I say the same of you, Isabel," was the parson's good-humoured rejoinder.

So they sat down to talk. In a very short time Mr. Brant was satisfied. When he discerned the presence of the few essential things which he required for his son's home-life, he divulged the object of his errand and it was speedily arranged that Yordas should become an inmate of his humble aunt's house. From that they went on to an interchange of personal talk and so to the tea-table. Whilst at the latter the woman's husband came in.

The parson evinced no anxiety to scrutinise the town laboriously. When he had made a pious pilgrimage to the venerable house in the Netherbow, and to No. 39 Castle Street, and had viewed the sun setting from the top of Arthur's Seat, he confessed his curiosity satisfied. The next day he devoted to



his academical engagements, and the day following he was gone.

After a walk of many miles it was late afternoon when Mr. Brant re-entered his own hills. The region fell upon him like a Sabbath land. It had been a fine glittering day, with ragged white clouds flying before a high west wind; now the lower clouds were grey-bodied, but above them, spanning the blue, were white filmy streaks of ethereal delicacy. From such a sky the sun shone intermittently, throwing quickly travelling shadows over the snow-patched hillsides; and then again revealing the sheep and storm-battered thorn-bush behind. It happened to be the kind of day which especially impressed Mr. Brant, and now returning to it from such far different scenes of life he viewed it with an added emotion. To heighten this he was greeted by the cry of the first curlew that had ventured up from the sands. Yordas too had heard it, for in eager expectation of his father he had wandered off alone on the track by which he knew the traveller would return. On the shoulder of Passpeth they met, and walked back to the parsonage together in animated talk.

That night Yordas heard the wind moaning as he lay awake, and was not surprised to find a country sprinkled with snow in the morning. During the next few days there was a heavy fall, and for the rest of March all things had returned to the conditions of winter. This kept the parson and his son busy with the sheep, and prevented the attendance of most of the parishioners at Harthope. Gideon Thew was constant, however, through fair weather or through foul. He always partook of dinner at the parsonage on Sunday, having at first doggedly brought his own viands and asked only for a glass of water, until Mr. Brant by sheer force of his authority compelled Thew to take a place at the

table and share in the meal provided, as was the custom with five other of the most distant parishioners. For two Sundays whilst the snow lay Thew was the only visitor. So Yordas gave up most of the afternoon to him. Mr. Brant retired to his study; Eleanor also withdrew to her own chamber; and, by Martha's permission, the other two took their books to the kitchen fire.

On the second of these Sundays, whilst they were seated reading, Martha also being at the table engaged with Matthew Henry's Commentary, the silence was suddenly broken by the sneck of the back door being lifted. The dog was aroused and barked, but stood up, stretched, and wagged his tail on seeing that it was Baillie Gourlock who entered. Such an irreverent and untimely interruption from anybody else would have excited the staid Martha's anger, but on recognising the figure over the top of her spectacles, and seeing the consternation of the girl, the woman expressed surprise merely. Baillie knew not what to answer. She herself scarcely knew why she had come. One thing, however, she knew distinctly, which was that she had built upon the conviction of Gideon Thew's not having come up through the snow.

"I had nothing else to do," at length stammered Baillie with unvarnished truth.

"Then I'm sadly mistaken in your mother, my lass," retorted Martha bluntly; "but come and sit you down. It's a terrible long storm and I doubt you'll weary at Redburnshank, no wonder! But get out and kick your shoes first. Just see how you're traipsing t' snow about." And whilst the girl withdrew in shame to rectify such a blunder, Martha wiped up with a cloth the melting bits of snow which had soiled her flagstones. On Baillie's returning, Martha put her in a chair, removed her cloak, and



promised her she had come to t' raight house, and that she should not there lack for anything profitable to do.

"And you'll have time to do it in, an' all," added Martha, looking out of the window, "for just look at yon drift ower t' Snear. Ay, you're in a bonnie pickle, lass, but never heed. We'll mak' you comfortable enough, and I suppose you telled 'em where you were coming to. It'll not be the first time you've been storm-stayed i' t' parsonage."

"But, Martha, I can't stay whatever comes on. I said I shouldna be long."

Yordas burst into laughter, and Gideon smiled.

"You're nabbed, Baillie," cried the boy. "It's no good wriggling with Martha. We shall all support her authority."

So Baillie gave in, and for an hour she was kept at the table to listen to the dissertations of Matthew Henry, which Martha laboriously bestowed upon her. During the time, Yordas and Thew were disturbed in their reading, although ostensibly engaged with their books. It was evidently the comic side of Baillie's embarrassment that struck the boy, for there was a constant twinkle in his eye as he looked across to the table. Though quite conscious of that eye, Baillie persistently avoided it. Thew evidently took the matter with all his accustomed seriousness. He also looked at the intruder frequently, but his features never relaxed.

The snow was still whirling down and obliterating all the prospect when Martha closed the book to prepare the tea. At that minute Mr. Brant came in, and with a look of astonishment greeted Baillie. The parson came to ask Gideon to speak with him a moment, and the two went to the study. Martha put the kettle on a lower hook to boil up, it had long been singing, and went to lay the table in the parlour.

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"Ord, I must really go," said Baillie anxiously.

"Why did you come down?"

"Because I thought you would be alone, and I thought I might not see you again before you went."

"Didn't Gideon ask you to come?"

"No; why should he?" asked the girl crossly.

"He'll take you home."

"He won't; I'll go alone."

"Nay, I'll take you."

Martha came in, but they were accustomed to conversing before her and did not cease. She went about her affairs without regarding them. When she came in again she put the tea in the pot and turned to the kettle. Yordas stepped up to her.

"Martha, tell Gideon that I'm going to take Baillie home, will you?"

"Ay, I'll tell him."

And Yordas ran off to get ready for the table.

"Gideon's a queer fellow," said Yordas as he and his companion were trudging through the snow scarcely an hour later. "He always reminds me of John Hall of Rede Water."

"What John Hall?"

"That man that carried off the other Baillie a hundred years ago. I'm sure Gideon could do a thing like that. I saw him watch us set off, and what eyes he had!"

"I wish you hadn't told me that," cried the girl excitedly. "I was always afraid of him. I shall be worse now. I shall always think of that."

"Don't be afraid of him. Yon Baillie was afraid of nobody. Keep up your name, my lass. How can he harm you? He could only have done that if he had lived a hundred years ago. Such things aren't done now."

"I believe you wish they were."

"I believe I do, Baillie," laughed Yordas, as they

turned the corner where the valleys met, and, by suddenly encountering the full force of the wind, the two were nearly overturned. To save herself, Baillie caught the boy's arm, and, so supported, fought the rest of her way up the valley. "At anyrate, I rather think I should like to have to save you from such a man," added Yordas presently in the teeth of the wind. And they scarcely spoke again all the way. But Baillie was in a glow of content. She didn't mind now if Ord had to go without again seeing her. When he said that he shouldn't go up to the house, as it would be dark soon, she didn't mind either. She would far rather say good-bye to him here. Under the shelter of a jutting rock, from which purple, leafless arms of briar and dead stalks of other plants stretched out of the drifted snow, they stood for a last word. The wind howled past the corner, but they were in the bield. Both faces were lashed into the purest glow, and Baillie's hair straggled over her cheeks. For an instant they had simply looked at each other.

"It'll be different yonder," said the girl.

"I shall come back for the holidays," returned he. "Good-bye."

They had never shaken hands, kissed, or used any other formality of farewell, so didn't quite know what to do. With the ludicrous thought, it for the first time occurred to Yordas that his companion was no longer a child exactly.

"Let's kiss," he said, however, at last, laughing, but as if half ashamed. They did so in a brief experimental manner, and the colour of both faces deepened; his from mere boyish reserve, hers from a slightly more conscious quality. Then, as if inspired by a more manly sentiment, Yordas flung his arm round Baillie boldly and kissed her again more fervently.

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"Good-bye, Baillie," he said. "We've had some jolly times. Don't forget me."

"No," she said, and they parted. They waved their hands once, and did not see each other again.

Most of the snow had melted on the morning that Mr. Brant took his son away, and it was warm and sunny. From a thorn-bush near the top of Passpeth Baillie commanded a view of the road through the dale, and, without exciting attention, she watched a gig drive along below her and disappear. But she did not get home till dinner.

## CHAPTER XVII

### FROM THE HILLSIDE

FROM that day, by tacit consent, some additional solemnity seemed to have come over the life at Harthope. When anybody came to the parsonage Mr. Brant was found doing his work alone, and from some instinctive delicacy all refrained from asking him of Yordas. At the evening meetings Mrs. Brant still sang and played for them, but she seemed unable to arouse the former enthusiasm either in herself or others. She questioned Baillie of this directly one night. The girl was startled at discovering that anybody else had perceived the change.

For Baillie herself, all existence had suffered an eclipse. It was not merely that she went down to the parsonage or to church and never saw Yordas, but also that she felt to have lost his companionship for ever. Affection and modesty alike warned her that the companion who had departed would not return. The change in him from his altered course of life would have placed them far as two hills asunder. They could but regard each other from afar. This had a marked effect on the development of Baillie which did not escape even Mr. Brant. She showed more timidity and diffidence in her behaviour. He had always been kind to her, now he began to display an increasing tenderness in their intercourse,



which deeply touched the girl and seemed to cement an unconfessed bond between them.

On one occasion Eleanor herself noticed this, and it resolved certain doubts of her own. She had found Mr. Brant's philosophic calm as soothing as Yordas had done, if at the same time it had excited a very different kind of speculation in her mind. She felt some compunction at the spirit of revolt in which she had planned her son's escape from the primitive conditions to which she had fancied him doomed by his father's will. If the parson gave way so readily to so radical a change, what was his philosophy? How came it that she had felt in such direct opposition to his scheme of life as to wreck deliberately all the happiness of a more than usually ideal commencement? These questions humiliated her, inspired in her a less impetuous and more sincere humility than any she had yet felt. It was on this account that the months immediately succeeding the removal of Yordas were months of such extraordinary serenity at the parsonage. Even Martha confessed a glimmer of charity towards her mistress.

So greatly was Eleanor affected that she again hoped for a complete conquest of her husband. At moments she craved for this. Her love for him had been genuine. It was still impossible for her but to respect, even reverence him. She remembered that victory on the evening of her return when she drew him to the church to consecrate their reunion. The passionate embrace vibrated in her soul still. Success was sweet to Eleanor; weakness or defeat was misery. The promise of that beginning had not been realised. So one lovely June evening, after a whole day in the field which was fenced off from the hillside behind the parsonage, and when Abram and Baillie had been down to help Mr. Brant with his "pickle hay," as Eleanor sat upon a haycock her spirit rose in her.



Mr. Brant was walking towards her in his summer flannel clothes with a rake in one hand. The appearance of his wife seemed to please him, and he said she looked happy, even radiant.

"I am happy," she declared emphatically. "Perhaps for the first time I have to-day realised what you mean by trusting only to the emotions that are awakened on the bare hillside."

"Good," observed Mr. Brant, as he placed himself at her feet.

"But I also think," added Eleanor, "that these safe emotions could not have been awakened without my having had the others elsewhere."

"I hardly like the word others. You recollect I did not forbid emotions elsewhere. I merely asserted that the emotions here and elsewhere must, to be safe, be of essentially the same kind. And of course we were speaking exclusively of religious emotions."

"Yes," said Eleanor, looking at the glowing hilltops.

"I dare not trust to religious emotions requiring artificial aids," resumed the parson. "They are not indeed religious emotions at all, but purely imaginative and artistic exaltation. Don't confuse religion and imagination."

"But all cannot be recluses and anchorites. Without imaginative assistance would not religion expire in the world?"

"Even with it, does it not?" asked Mr. Brant, with a smile. "But I have nothing to do with polemics, Eleanor. I like the old saying, 'If thou seest aught amiss in another, mend it in thyself.' I will only say this, in which I think history will support me, that the degree of the imaginative assistance you speak of is in exact ratio to the degree of the real religion of the time."

This was scarcely the conversation that Eleanor had courted, and with the aid of the natural display

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about them she turned it into another course. But when the dew arose, and they were walking to the house, she made another effort.

"But you do not distrust *all* personal emotion, Anthony? What is affection? What is love?"

The quick utterance betrayed the activity of the mind. Mr. Brant was startled.

"Certainly I do not," said he.

"But can you not reduce it all to imagination?"

"Not if it is real. It is because of its being imaginative that it generally dies."

"And what proves its reality? How are we to know?"

"We can have no certain knowledge."

"Oh, Anthony, this is dreadful! I will not accept it. I believe good impulses are divine, and if the imagination is the source of impulses it must be divine also. What a world should we make of it!"

"But I do not say we are never to act upon imaginative impulses, Eleanor. We know that we are compelled so to act, and must accept the consequences. It is in the first development of the imagination that our opportunity lies. The sounder that development, of course, the sounder will be all that springs from it. Until in some ultimate state, even of human existence, it is quite conceivable that our impulses might become almost infallible guides. If the imagination is based upon permanent, what I call religious, sources of inspiration, instead of upon the shifting sands of a purely artificial, even commercial, culture, is it not inevitable that human life should itself largely partake of that central peace, and in so doing be raised from its pitiful condition of inconstancy and mistake to a level in some degree compatible with the dignity, the directness and permanence of the rest of God's creations?"

With this they reached the house, and without

replying Eleanor hurried to her room. Mr. Brant seldom thus delivered himself in private. His fervour had raised the inevitable flutter in his wife. She felt to have suffered a defeat. So long as she accepted his piety in action it soothed her, but whenever she approached its sources this agitation was the result. She completed her toilet tremulously but with haste, and when she had done, hearing movements in the next room, she tapped and went in to Baillie. The girl was to stay at the parsonage that night, to be ready to help in completing the work in the hayfield next day. Some ordinary company was just then a necessity for Eleanor.

"May I help you?" she said as she entered.

Baillie had not finished dressing, and looked beautiful in her disarrangement. Eleanor seized her, and pressed the girl ardently to her breast as she kissed her. She then undertook to dress her hair, and otherwise adorn a person usually dependent upon its own simplicity for embellishment. There was some impetuosity in Mrs. Brant's tenderness which Baillie did not quite understand, but it did not now trouble her. She took all the attentions good-humouredly, even with some amount of ingenuous glee. It reminded her of the day on the top of the Wether Cairn amongst the noops, and this was sufficient.

This vivacity of Eleanor's continued through the evening, and Baillie enjoyed it. Mr. Brant, who was fatigued by his prolonged labour of the day, spent the time with them, and appeared also to relax. He produced several illustrated books, historical and archæological mainly, and spoke of the subjects in a simple and entertaining manner. Once, as Baillie leaned attentively over a volume, Mr. Brant placed his hand gently and paternally upon her head, and the frank childish and filial affection with which the



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girl raised her face to put her questions was also noticed by Mrs. Brant. After prayers, Baillie was despatched to bed, and in saying good-night she instinctively leaned down to kiss Mr. Brant, but afterwards, seeing a smile on the lady's face, she blushed.

"She is a nice child," said Eleanor when the door was closed and the girl out of hearing.

"An admirable one," added the parson.

Eleanor got up and handled the book they had last had, still lying upon the table. There were a few minutes silence, the rustling of the turned leaf alone breaking the stillness. Then the stately lady turned, rather abruptly.

"Bless me also, Anthony. I am tired." And forthwith she knelt at her husband's knee.

The action was unusual. In addition to it there was something new in Eleanor's face as she propped it on her two hands to look into the clergyman's eyes. He let his hand rest upon one of her shoulders, but she did not know how he shrank. How much more than those few missing years was now between them! This, Eleanor did know; but on the way home she had felt defeat, within the last hour she had had doubts resolved. This humility had been a mistake. How escape that spirit of revolt? A wave of a very different kind now upbore her. She did not flinch before his gaze, and he perceived it.

Eleanor knew her power, and without a single glance behind her she swept majestically onward. Before that eye such humble virtues as meekness, self-distrust, and contrition found their level. She spurned, she trampled them. She held the parson's eye as fearlessly as she had held her son's in that fortune-reading beneath the moon. What tenderness had failed to win her, effrontery had been able to exact. In this physical contest Eleanor was supreme.

She felt herself accepted, and before rising from her knees had obtained her blessing, wrapt ardently in her husband's arms.

But as regarded her husband, that single display of authority sufficed. Indeed Eleanor soon repented, and was even ashamed of it. It had, however, served its purpose by justifying her determination to herself. There was no other way than this. If she was to rescue Yordas she now knew how it must be done. No change followed in the general life at the parsonage. The return of Yordas for the vacation restored unanimity, for in him all could meet without reserve. Even all Baillie's forebodings were belied. Yordas was a little altered, but all for the better. With a thrill of delight Baillie saw this in an instant. Mr. Brant, perhaps by design, alone witnessed their first meeting. The youth had brought back some presents for distribution, and that for Baillie was a small bust of Sir Walter Scott. As the two met, there was an ingenuous flush of astonishment in each. They did not repeat that experiment of kissing with which they had parted. What had become chivalrous dignity in Yordas was maidenly beauty in Baillie, and those benign qualities of life's morning hovered radiantly about them throughout this brief renewal of their intercourse.

Mrs. Brant systematically set herself to retain the confidence of Baillie. Eleanor's close scrutiny had soon revealed the secret of Gideon Thew. That the sage wheelwright had founded his renewed hopes of life mainly upon Baillie could not long be hidden from so much penetration and experience. The lady's courage rose. For his own part, nobody could have acted with more delicate reserve than Gideon. Viewing Baillie as still a girl, all he now sought was to familiarise her with his presence, to obtain merely her unrestrained goodwill by frank revelations of

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himself. Even this was hard. To his astonishment he found in it the most effectual assistance from Mrs. Brant. And so their life proceeded.

But in each succeeding holidays Yordas returned with other interests than the romantic and historical ones which were his first chief associations with Edinburgh and the north, and these fresh topics did not so naturally suggest conversations with Baillie. At Eleanor's instigation, too, serious discussions arose at the parsonage as to the course of life Yordas was to pursue. Mr. Brant would hardly have originated such a question. The needs of life appeared to him so few, and his own career had been a matter of such philosophic growth, that he seemed to imagine the existence of his son would in the course of nature develop branch and foliage on its appointed lines. His contributions to the discussions, therefore, were of a purely fundamental kind, and he as readily acquiesced in the suggestion that Yordas should take a medical course as he would have approved of his herding sheep. So with this design the young man returned in the year following, and all went as before.

It was yet another year later, on a blustering day of October, when Baillie brought her butter down as usual that she found the quiet parsonage in a state of confusion. After that fit of initial shyness, Baillie had soon returned to the old routine and dispensed with Gideon Thew's services for conveying her dairy produce to the carrier. As the girl stepped into the kitchen nobody heeded her, so she slipped out again. Mr. Brant was talking severely to Martha. The dependant was receiving his remarks with her characteristic bluntness, and "Martha! Martha!" was being called in Eleanor's voice from the head of the staircase. In a moment the clergyman came out with his staff in his hand and the dog behind him.



"Leave your butter, Baillie, and come with me. I am going to Redburnshank for the gig."

In silent astonishment the girl did as she was bidden, and immediately rejoined Mr. Brant. As they walked on he explained the circumstances to her.

They had that morning received a letter announcing the fact that Yordas had contracted a virulent fever, and that in all probability even his life was in danger. Mrs. Brant was to set off instantly to his side. After that they walked on silently for some distance.

"Do you think he ought ever to have gone yonder, Mr. Brant?" asked Baillie at last, as a relief to her feelings. "I've seen it coming on ever since he went. He ought to have stayed here to help you."

"No, no, Baillie; it's all right," said the parson. And they did not exchange another word on the journey.

Martha watched the gig depart with infinite satisfaction. Whilst it was going she swept some marks from the stones of the kitchen and yard, and it might have appeared that she was anxious to remove the last traces of her mistress from a household to which Martha was convinced she had brought nothing but woe. From there she went up to the lady's bedroom with dustpan, dusters, and brush.

"We'll have a week'or two's peace i' t' house now, anyway," she mused audibly as she proceeded with her employment. "But happen she'll be for staying yonder altogether so long as t' lad's there. . . . Ay, I shouldn't wonder. It'll be the beginning o' the end if she does, I'll warrant. He can't stand none o' your goings-on. I've been more of a mother to him than you ivver have or ivver will be, and you'll see. There'll be a bonnie reck'ning up some day, I know, and you'll 'ev to look after yoursel' when it does come, and no mistake about it."

With a ceaseless current of such pungent and

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ensorious reflections Martha continued her work in solitude until Mr. Brant returned several hours later.

Eleanor reached Edinburgh in the afternoon, and for a week she was engaged in incessant harrowing attentions to Yordas. After that time Mr. Brant received a reassuring letter, and through the wind and rain he immediately took it up to Redburnshank. All exercised proper control over themselves so long as they were in company, but when the parson had set off, Baillie escaped after him with a shawl thrown over her head, and overtook him halfway down the brae. She was out of breath, and the tears which streamed with the rain down her features almost choked her.

"Nobody thanked you for coming, Mr. Brant," she tried to say.

"I knew that you would want to know, Baillie. Now run back."

"He'll come home soon?"

The parson nodded, and she went.

Good reports continued to reach the parsonage, but any sort of movement was strictly forbidden. At length Eleanor added, "I am sure you will agree with me that in face of this terrible time of year we must not think of the boy coming to Harthope to regain his strength. He is, of course, a shadow, and any cold would be fatal. Can we manage a week or two at any seaside place near here?"

It chanced that Mr. Brant looked from the sheet to a cloudless January sky out of which the sun came warm through his window. The hills rose like smooth white clouds against it. The burn foamed noisily in its bed. The parson sat down and began a letter to Yordas, opening with a brief record of what he beheld from his chair. In his reply the son said, "Mother had not mentioned her scheme to me when she wrote.

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Of course I shall come home. If I have only to sit at your window all the time I shall get stronger than kicking up my heels in any strange quarters. We are not allowed to fix the day, but you shall have due notice."

So Yordas returned to the hills to complete his recovery.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### RESPITE

**I**N spite of all Gideon Thew's delicate ways, Baillie's fear of him had very much increased during the absence of Yordas. She was now a young woman, and understood the object of his attentions, although by a nervously watchful exercise of tact she had hindered his making any approach to a declaration of affection.

With the preternatural eyes of a lover, Gideon of course saw all this, and his patient submission was again rapidly sinking to dejection. During these wintry days, for the first time since he began, his attendance at Harthope had become irregular.

On a cold grey afternoon, near the end of January, hearing wheels stop on the road outside his workshop at Bridgend, he looked up and saw a closed carriage there. Mr. Brant was stepping from the door, which he closed immediately after him. Gideon doggedly worked on. He returned the parson's greeting, however, and attended him upon Mr. Brant's requesting a word. They walked towards the cottage, but stopped at the door without going in.

"I don't know, Mr. Brant; I'll come if I can."

"There's nothing wrong?" said the parson kindly.

"I whiles think it's all wrong."

"I have known that thought," replied Mr. Brant,

with a look into Gideon's face. "But come if you possibly can."

Thew saw his companion get in, and then followed the carriage in his mind on its journey up the desolate valley amongst the hills. That night, sitting in his cottage alone, Gideon resolved to go.

It was two days later, and having not much work he set off early in the afternoon. The air was milder, the wind blowing gently from the hills (although they were snow-clad) instead of fog-laden from the sea, as it had mostly blown since the new year. The grey sea of clouds was breaking up as he set off, and the sky rapidly became one of exquisite variety. Great rolling fragments with clear heads touched the higher hills, and an infinity of high cirri was dashed about the blue. The pure beauty and softness of the atmosphere exercised its soothing effect upon Gideon, for, like the sky, he had started in an over-clouded state. He could not withdraw his eyes from the roseate hues with which the glancing sun tinged the snow, the wondrous colours it inwrought with the bare twigs of the scattered trees, and the clumps of deep purple-blue to which it turned the dark and distant woods. As he left his own garden a tit had piped loudly to him its thoughts of spring; from a stake by the bridge a dunnoek had burst into full blithe song; and now, up the dale, rooks cawed to him as they passed soberly in scattered flocks far overhead. So Thew reached Harthope in a different mood from that in which he had set off.

On meeting Yordas he still further softened. The severe illness had left its impress upon the young man, and as Gideon took his hand he found it impossible to support the grim thoughts that had haunted him so long. To Yordas himself the wheelwright was but an attribute of home, and so viewed with the deepest cordiality.



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Yes, the lad, now a full-grown youth, was but a shadow of himself, the only feature about him that was heightened being his irrepressible eyes. These alone must have subdued Gideon, for they shone upon him with all the serene lustre of the sun above the hills. Their light pierced and illumined the gloom of his soul, and after some radiant hours on the parson's hearth the man hurried home through the dark in an agony of tears. He could no longer hate the lad.

For some days Yordas simply basked in the glow and fragrance of his father's peat fireside. In no previous holidays had he felt this peculiar keenness of impression. When alone he would remove with the tongs a half-burnt block of peat, and hold it like a censer that the incense smoke might more effectually fill the air about him. No doubt weakness, as much as development of sense, inspired this strong emotion in him. Once, as he was doing it, his mother unexpectedly entered. Through the haze they laughed at each other.

"What incantation is this?" said she.

"Ha, mother! You don't know," cried Yordas, sniffing up the pungent fumes with voluptuous transport. "What are all your myrrhs, balms, and spikenards to this?"

"Beware!" she said, raising a forefinger. "That way danger lies."

"Then let it come. With all my soul I'll welcome it—feed, breathe, exist upon it. And so will you."

"You forget, dear boy, that I have tried," said Eleanor, with a sudden gravity arresting his eye.

"And where did it fail?"

Long had the question hovered on the son's lips. At last it was uttered, abruptly and unexpectedly. Eleanor looked to the door and closed it. She came back to him, and said quickly—



"In being a mood, a treacherous, untrained impulse of youth."

"I don't believe anything can be treacherous that is true to home," said Yordas, with precocious wisdom. But, seeing his mother start, he bit his lip and coloured. "You know I do not mean that, mother," he added, with unexpected reference to the thought of both.

"I know you did not, my boy. Hints and secrets do not exist between us. What you mean, you will say; what I mean, I shall. In your noble sense nothing can be treacherous that is true to home, but you now know that all generous moods cannot support an actual step in life. It is only in this that lies the danger. Take an irreparable step upon a consuming impulse, and all life totters."

"Then you quench all enthusiasm."

"On the contrary, I intensify by curbing and compressing it. By moods the imagination lives, but only in the hands of reason. Adopt one mood and you are a fanatic, if you are small enough; if you are too large"—Eleanor hesitated.

"Go on—what?" asked Yordas, with a smile.

"In all probability you shatter somebody else's life, and take an inextinguishable fever into your own. Trust me in this, Yordas."

"I will, mother."

In radiant beauty the woman stood, belying her own philosophy. But it was the beauty that Yordas saw; it was this to which he bowed in complete homage, and which by ceaseless fluttering and hovering about his path retained his imagination throughout those weeks at home. Beneath its influence the youth kept up a wholesome distrust of his own inclinations. During the time, Eleanor showed an invincible intrepidity in defence of her young which seemed almost shameless when contrasted with the

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diffidence and humility of her past experience. This caused the intercourse between father and son to seem superficial mainly. Direct antagonism to what he saw, Mr. Brant would not offer. Perhaps personal pride and dignity (for people said he was not without them) forbade the parson to interpose in so clearly expressed a bond between Yordas and his mother. To assert the undimmed affection, and even tenderness, subsisting between himself and Yordas, glances, hand-touches, were enough, and they were not wanting.

So that when, sitting together one night, Eleanor broached the subject of herself going to lodge in Edinburgh with Yordas, Mr. Brant seemed almost prepared for it, and scarcely knew surprise. There were so many arguments in support of it; none, except such as the clergyman saw to be peculiar to himself, against it. As Yordas happened not to be present, the conversation progressed further than it had done before, since the husband and wife's re-meeting. The only obstacle which Eleanor had foreseen was the inevitable one of ways and means. But this Mr. Brant lightly disposed of. His own wants and those of his parish were few; he could still, he said, easily supply them with half of his income, as he had done to his wife during the years they were parted. Even when supplemented by his pastoral employments this income had never exceeded a hundred and forty pounds, so, as the parson pointed out, the arrangement would necessitate their most stringent economy. In case of real emergency, however, he had still some money saved which could meet any requirements.

"All mine is lost," said Eleanor abruptly, staring in the fire.

"I feared so," replied Mr. Brant; "but, as you know, from my point of view that is of no account. I wish for your own sake, dear Eleanor, it was the

same to you. What more can a man want than ten pounds a year for books? Throughout my life I have been able to spare that, and you see what is the result," said the parson complacently, waving his hand around. "All that the human soul has produced."

"Scarcely," smiled Eleanor. "But shall we not deprive you of this ten pounds?"

"It has become a necessity of life. I could not now relinquish it."

"Thank you, Anthony, for that."

But when Yordas heard of this negotiation of his mother's he recoiled from it, and it was only after three days' joint consultation of the three that he was brought to submit. It was a private interview with his mother that vanquished him. So at length was it resolved, and afterwards the day of departure seemed rapidly to be attained. It was a significant fact that Baillie had not so much as heard of the project before it was actually carried out. Her intercourse with the parsonage this time had been of the slightest, and when she and Yordas had chanced to meet, everybody saw that their youthful intimacy was broken. It was not that Yordas was other than frankly cordial to all, but obviously he was no longer in any sense a boy. The two had only seen each other in the presence of others, and they had plainly met on the most easy and complacent terms. Indeed, the physical growth and polite exterior of Yordas were alone sufficient to put the hint of conventional distance between figures formerly adjusted to one simple, almost barbaric, type. Baillie was comely, even beautiful, to be sure, but it was of that homely sort of beauty that radiated virtues rather than acquirements, sound instinct instead of culture.

Such instinct had of course instantly revealed all this to Baillie, just as it had at the same time enabled her to accept it. She also, as has been said, was no

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longer a girl, and the first glimpse of Yordas had cured any girlish emotions with which she had hitherto trifled. But she thought. So on coming down to the parsonage one day she was astonished to hear from Martha that Yordas and Mrs. Brant had gone. The announcement was made in a characteristic way which aroused Baillie's laughter.

"Ay, I knew how it 'ud be," proclaimed the household censor. "It was all she ivver came here for. When you get so much o' that repentance, praying, and such-like, you can sniff in what airt the wind lies. There's summat to be blown up afore you've done wi't. I cannot abide such ways. And as I've telled Mr. Brant, an' all, he'll repent it. He means right, but, whativver he is, in yon job I'm certain sure he's in t' wrong. Do you mean to tell me that a man, whether parson or common, is not to be master in his own house, and do what he's a mind wi' his own childer?"

"But Mr. Brant can't be wrong," replied Baillie simply. "He does what he thinks is best for his son and not for himself."

"Ay, so he says; but you'll see. But here, hold a minute. He said he wanted to see you t' next time you were down. I'll ask him if you shall come in." Martha returned from the study and Baillie went in.

"Baillie, I'm going to ask your parents if you may come and live down here," began the parson abruptly. "What do you say?"

She could say nothing, so great was the shock. Mr. Brant laughed.

"You wouldn't mind?"

"There's nothing I should like so much."

"Then we'll talk of it. Of course we must think of your mother, but Willie and Dave are getting handy lads, so I think it can be managed. You it



will do good in some respects, and myself in a great many. I shall come up this afternoon. That's all I wanted."

Baillie was so entranced by the suggestion that she was unable to break it to her mother, and when in the afternoon she at last saw the expected figure of Mr. Brant coming up the brae she ran right off. Despite all her self-control this prospect of such a revolution in her life overwhelmed her with agitation. From her first childhood the atmosphere of the parsonage had had some magic influence over her. There she saw wonderful books, heard marvellous stories. Within its radiance life seemed something different from the workaday routine with which she was so familiar at home. She always did work down there also; saw Mr. Brant and Yordas regularly engaged in employments not unlike her father's; yet the effect was so different. The toil became transfigured. Irradiated by the fancy and cheerful piety of the parson it seemed but the means to something delightful, never an end wearying in itself.

It was this view of the matter that had mainly excited the girl since its first proposal, and which still clung to her now as she fled from the house. Her life would be enlivened, nay, inspired. But the mere action of flight and the direction she was taking gave her a new thought. She would also be more secure from the attentions of Gideon Thew. Often lately, when she had chanced to see his approach, had she fled to this spot. It was a group of birch trees by a jutting crag, which overhung the Red burn tumbling down the hillside. She reached it panting, and flung herself down with rapturous laughter. When she had regained her breath she even burst into a song, one which Mrs. Brant had taught her. At the same moment the sombre grey ridges of the March sky parted and allowed the sun to throw one

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passing glance at Baillie and away up the opposite green slope. She watched the sheep, which were so vividly revealed by it, and their clear-cut shadows on the grass. Then she laughed again, but, hearing a movement, looked round.

There stood Gideon Thew.



## CHAPTER XIX

### TERMS

THIS man at times could offer a striking, even a majestic, figure, and so he did now. Baillie's eyes rested upon him without her altering her posture of repose. A seagull flying far over them croaked and chuckled at what he saw. Both heard it, but only Gideon looked up. That voice had more power over him than any sound in nature. By a sudden association Baillie recalled the long black tress of seaweed she had seen on his cottage wall that night so long ago. Then, as abruptly, she read the man's own thoughts.

"You think we all make fun of you," she said, breaking the silence first.

"Yes, I was thinking that."

"But it's not true of me. I've never even thought of you in fun since yon day in the wood."

Gideon lowered his brows.

"How dare you say that, Baillie? Do you not come here constantly to avoid me? Do you not laugh and sing with thinking that I'll not find you at home after I've walked many a mile just to get a glimpse of you, and to have one word only o' your tongue? . . . Nay, but you're right. Surely it's more than fun."

"I never laughed and sang with such a thought as

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you give me," asserted Baillie, springing up. "You have no right to say that I lie."

"Did you never come here to avoid me?"

"Ay, that I did, but not to-day. Do you suppose I have nothing else to think of but you all day?"

Seeing the sudden effect upon his features she at once repented the blow. She did not know that it was all the deadlier because of the mood in which Thew had come up the dale. It had been really a critical and long-planned journey. Gideon had only waited for the departure of Yordas to carry it out, and every detail, at anyrate of the opening, had been suitably and hopefully arranged. These circumstances as they fell out had demolished one after another of the man's intentions, until now every clue to the situation was gone. All the hope with which the late visit of Yordas had inspired him lay shattered in his soul. It was a sense of impotent despair portrayed in Thew's features which gave Baillie her conscientious qualm.

"Gideon Thew, forgive me!" said the girl with solemn earnestness and calm. "Whether I think of you or no', it grieves me to give you pain. But we must understand each other."

"We must; that is all I am here for now. Let me speak, Baillie. Let me tell you what I have come to say."

The note of appeal in such a man as Thew thrilled Baillie. She knew he ought not to speak. Long ago instinct had proclaimed his secret in language beyond all words—had proclaimed and irrevocably disposed of it. But she stood speechless and motionless. She had not the heart to forbid him. Unfortunately for Thew's keen sensibility, at no moment of her life had Baillie stood so radiantly invested with all the simple majesty of earliest womanhood. She

stood and listened, whilst the water of the burn plunged a deep undertone of accompaniment to his solemn, impassioned words.

"That I love you, Baillie, you now know, but how I love you your heart could never imagine, and such a tongue as I hae got could never tell you. It just began in a wee glint o' light yon night you were upset on the Edge, when Mrs. Brant came back; but you were a bairn then, and what was just a sparkle to show me that I was in a world and not in the black void o' hell has since burned into a sun, spreading not only light but warmth and a varry life about me. I have had clouds, just like yon bonny blue sky is now overclouded, but whiles you have peeped at me through a rift, and all the world has been put into a blaze of glory. That's on what I have lived since you set foot in my house at Bridgend—ay, that alone, for without it I find all the rest drifts to wreck. Nor then can even Mr. Brant uphold me. It grows all dark again. I cannot work; I cannot read a word; nay, doubts of the love o' God again come over me; and oh, lass, if you could ever ken what that might mean, you'd pity me, you'd help me."

"Without knowing it, I do pity you," interposed Baillie quickly, frightened by his face. "I'd do all I could for you, but, Mr. Thew, I canna love you."

"Not yet, not yet. It isn't likely. That's not what I ask, Baillie. I didn't come here to ask it. All I want is that you'll let me love you; that you'll just talk to me like you do to other folk; that you'll not hide from me whenever I come near you. That's all I came to beg of you; it's likely that's all the world 'ull ever have for me; but with that I can live. It's surely a small asking; dinna refuse it me."

"But it's not so small," answered Baillie, lowering

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her eyes before the gaze he fixed on her. "How can I talk to you like other folk when you have confessed that you love me? Should I not be a shameless and heartless woman if I could do that to you? Will not this very meeting come up between us every time we talk?"

"Ay, it may; but what then?"

"What then?" cried Baillie in frank astonishment.

"What then?" re-echoed Gideon. "You're not like the rest of them. Do you think I should ask such a thing of any other lass? No, no. It's your own modesty blinds you, Baillie. Lasses are common enough, but a Baillie Gourlock comes but once in a hundred years. Ay, you may laugh. But I'm no flatterer. I never yet said to a woman's ear what didna come from the bottom of my own heart. To you, my lass, my asking is small."

The man's obvious sincerity was giving strength to Baillie, was removing the startling situation from the dangers of emotion to the calm region of intelligence. The girl could see it from without, and perhaps began to feel that she was strong. With the sudden perception nearly all sense of fear had left her.

"Then I'll try to do what you ask," she said, with composure. "But if you show your love to me, if you ever again try to speak a word of it to me, Gideon Thew, it shall all be ended. I would never speak to you again."

For an instant Gideon seemed aghast at the rigorous condition, but Baillie's features never altered before him. So, lowering his eyes, he accepted.

In a few minutes they parted, Baillie forbidding him to attend her to the house. By this brief interview she had made the firmest advance into womanhood she had yet experienced, and she heard the parson's voice in consultation with her mother



almost without a tremor. She employed herself outside until she was called. Then she calmly and maturely took her part in the talk. Mother and daughter silently watched Mr. Brant depart, and saw him encounter another figure on the level path by the burnside.

"Wha's yon?" said the elder.

"Gideon Thew," was the prompt reply, and the eyes of each were turned upon the other. Baillie at once gave her mother an account of the recent interview, revealing in detail her own part in it.

"He's a good man," observed the mother, looking into the fire.

"And a strange one," added Baillie.

"Most men are," was the elder's philosophical reflection.

"But not all"; and as she moved about her employment the young woman turned to the secure ground of Mr. Brant. She had long suspected her mother of favouring Gideon. Now she knew it.

Abram readily consented to his daughter's going to the parsonage. With the development of things there he always felt implicated. Now and then arose that deep-rooted compunction at the part he had himself played in so abruptly imposing Mrs. Brant's presence upon the quiet life of her husband, so that he now felt some degree of satisfaction at being able to contribute something from his own fireside to brighten that of the parson. He and Martha found some unanimity in their estimate of Eleanor, and exchanged views freely. They were also fortunately at one with regard to this new step of Baillie's.

It was a grey windy day when the young woman went down to Harthope, and, arriving there in the afternoon, she stepped in as if come upon one of her usual errands. Mr. Brant was out at the time, but

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Martha was getting the tea ready, and when presently the parson came down from the hill the look upon his face altered suddenly as he entered.

"Welcome, Baillie, welcome!" he said, touching her shoulder, and then sat down to change his boots.

But after tea Mr. Brant had her into his study and disclosed more of what was in his mind. The grey wind was now charged with rain, and the music of its splash against the panes became an inseparable part of the interview in Baillie's imagination. The parson had pointed to the buffet by the hearth, and this the girl occupied whilst he spoke, walking from corner to corner of the room. He had scarcely begun before there was a polite scratching at the door, and the clergyman paused to let in the dog. The animal prostrated himself at Baillie's feet, and with chin extended upon his front paws evinced through the gaze of his languid eyes a sympathetic interest in the subject of their talk. It was to him mostly that Baillie looked.

"Baillie, you are now full-grown," Mr. Brant had begun, "and I must talk to you without reserve. This step of mine, you will understand, is one of pure selfishness, but from my lifelong knowledge of you I believe it may be turned somewhat to your advantage. Such, at anyrate, is my desire, and I ask you to help me in the attempt. You have not felt entirely easy at home for some time?"

"No, Mr. Brant, I have not."

"Don't be ashamed of it. It does not arise from fault in you, still less from any in your worthy parents. Such things occur in the course of the sun. It was so in my own case, but a boy has so many more chances of liberating himself. For you it might have been difficult. Now it appeared to me that while indulging myself I might put this salve to my



conscience, of assisting you. You will hardly yet realise that moral worth has very little to do with intellectual acquirements. All intellectual acquirements are poison which are not consistent with, or even the direct outcome of, moral worth. But what I mean is, there may be the highest degree of moral worth in a person of insufficient intellectual attainments. That is the divine mercy of God. Moral worth, which is the very source of human life, is within the effort of all, and free to all. It is, so to speak, the grass, whilst intellectual attainments are the birds and flowers in God's meadows. These are benign gifts of the few, imparted with the direct object of adding fresh beauties to the world, of inspiring our souls with fresh and ceaseless aspirations. You will think I might have kept this to tell you in church," proceeded the parson, with a smile, as he paused in his walking, "as I have already there told it you times without number, but I introduce it now for our particular personal occasion. It illustrates your own situation, as it did my own a great number of years ago. In moral worth and beauty, I believe no soul in this realm surpasses your own mother; in intellectual capacity and attainments you yourself far outstrip her. It is because of this that I have seen help for you through my own private needs. Whilst clinging in the first place to all moral virtue that your mother has bequeathed you, I believe you can here find fuller opportunity than at Redburnshank for the development of your other faculties, and remember that the reverent development of these is a duty second only to keeping up the clear fire of the former."

The girl turned her face, which was supported in one hand, so as to look at Mr. Brant, and he stopped to return the movement. But she could say nothing. Even the dog, whose eyes then opened, wrinkled his forehead in some canine sympathetic reflection. At

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this the parson laughed playfully and drew in his chair. His sermon was done.

For some time longer they talked, descending to the particulars of their new life. Definite reading was arranged, certain studies projected, out and indoor work assigned. And so to supper-time the hours wore away. After this meal Mr. Brant always sat alone.

In the solitude of her room, as she lay wakeful, Baillie went over it all again. It was more, so much more, than she had ever dreamed. In the agitation of novelty she naturally exaggerated all it meant to her. It had not escaped her, however, that never once in their conversation had Yordas been mentioned. This was her last thought before falling asleep, and it formed the subject of her dreams. The dreams were not happy, and it was with a sigh of relief that Baillie awoke to the light of morning. The day's activities quickly threw off the night's impressions, and those first dreams proved no augury of the girl's after sensations. An unbounded joy took possession of her. It seemed no mere change of locality, but a transformation of her being. Subtle influences of all kinds breathed upon her with such effect as could not escape the observation of Mr. Brant. Baillie's instant response to his attentions surprised him, and the effect was beyond anything he had thought. He spoke more and more freely to her. If she had thought there was to be reticence about Yordas she soon found her mistake. His progress and prospects were openly mentioned, the possible changes in him fearlessly discussed. It came at last that Mr. Brant even read out to her extracts from his letters. The first occasion of this was a thrilling experience for Baillie, but she bravely surmounted it. The topic was herself, and the new domestic arrangements with which she was concerned at the parsonage.

"It is a daily pleasure to me, dear father, to think of it," wrote the young man, "for you know I have never really fallen in with this new plan whereby you were abandoned to the tender mercies of Martha alone. Now I can regard it a little more complacently since I know Baillie's private devotion to you, and since I also know that intimate communion between you will reveal qualities in her which you have not yet even suspected. Tell her that in my absence I commend you to her, and expect her to fill my place as well as her own."

The extracts read became longer, until at length Mr. Brant used to hand Baillie the whole letter to read for herself. Of the first one so handed to her she could not read a word. She held the paper before her, gazed at it, even turned over the page when she thought she had stared long enough, and finally returned it to Mr. Brant without a word. She knew nothing whatever of its contents, and when the parson talked of them she dropped "yes" or "no" at random. The next time she did better, and finally her nervousness was overcome. The reading of these letters became the chief source of Baillie's joy and growth.

But with the summer came also Mrs. Brant and Yordas, and Baillie had for the time being to return home. The young man had gained some considerable academical distinction to which even pecuniary emolument was attached, and the effect upon himself and his mother was conspicuous. It was their spirit which seemed to animate that vacation, and to throw about the parsonage some unwonted gaiety from the outside world. Nor gaiety only. Vivacious controversies lightly invaded the quiet of Harthope life, some of which reached the long ears of Martha, not without suitable remark. But this had to be spent mostly in soliloquy, or in private intercourse with the cow, for

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even she was restrained now from open speech with Yordas, and this was not the time for engaging with Mr. Brant.

This breeze, however, which so rippled the waters, passed, and the parsonage quickly recovered its calm. But not even to the parson himself were things quite what they had been. He had been so long established here at the sources that, since his youth, the issues of life out on the main had materially altered, so that the distance between himself and Yordas was in externals increased. The youth himself was at a dogmatic stage which is easily scared from too intimate a discussion, and which finds refuge from growing differences in personal devotion. Both he and his father knew that this was unimpaired between them, and beyond it neither had ventured to go.

So even Mr. Brant's philosophic calm was touched. There appeared more change in Yordas than he had expected, whilst the open abandonment by his wife of all the spirit of sacrifice in which she had some years before come back to him aroused a tremor in his soul. Here was no superficial distinction merely, or, if it were, Eleanor's garb was armour. Vulgarity was impossible to her; ignoble personal triumphs were disdained. Yet in no ripple of her brows, in no flash of her graceful person, was the relative consequence of the two worlds ignored. Every attribute was queenly; nothing mere womanly. The parson saw all this more distinctly when she had gone, and he pondered it.

The homely routine of his pastoral life came back to him with an added fragrance. He plunged with renewed zeal into his elementary studies with Baillie, gave more of his emotional glow to his flock scattered on the hills. He also at length exchanged some letters with Eleanor. But he did not give Baillie



these to read. All those of Yordas were still as frankly communicated and discussed. Yes, now more and more discussed, for in her simplicity Baillie had many questions to ask about them. Some imagination she had, but she found it difficult to follow Yordas into all the impassioned flights to which his cultured surroundings enticed him. Although he had found it hard to talk to his father, he could write as candidly as ever. Indeed, he found it a necessity to do so, as a sort of outlet to certain imperative devotional needs which this alone appeased. Baillie always knew when a letter had arrived, and those evenings she went to the study with a fluttering heart. On one such occasion she unexpectedly found Mr. Brant standing with the letter in his hand. As he looked at her she blushed deeply, a weakness she had not betrayed before. Even he seemed to hesitate. For the first time in all their intercourse there was a moment's constraint. Neither spoke. It was the parson that at length broke the silence as he put the letter in her hand. "Yes, read it, and then come out to me. We'll walk up to the Cleugh." With that he left the room and closed the door behind him. Baillie stood for a minute irresolute, then read this—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—What can I say to your letter? I believe I do fully understand it, and I am certainly not capable of supposing that you speak from any wish to limit my aims. You have always overrated both my goodness and capacity by investing me with all the qualities that shine in yourself. To disappoint you would be one of the greatest calamities that could befall me. But I don't believe I shall disappoint you. That I shall play my part upon a stage very different from the one with which all my earliest years are associated is highly probable,

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but what of that? It will certainly not divide us. As you have so constantly pointed out to me, it is not locality or situation that gives moral worth to life. The sun rises upon the Calton Hill, and even the Canongate, as it does upon Passpeth and the Whitlees Burn. All forms part of one glorious world. Yes, I have taken the opportunity you wished me to compare carefully the thrush's and blackbird's song. The worst of it is I could hardly do it critically, for in each I was distracted by visions which the notes called up to me. But I fear, in opposition to the opinion you wish for, I am at present all for the wise thrush. There seems a perpetual 'o'erword' to the blackbird which brings up grotesque pictures of John Knox! His sable wing draws a veil over one half of the universe, to which I very strongly object. But more of this next time. With love as always from—  
Your affectionate YORDAS."

When she had read it twice, Baillie took the letter out with her to Mr. Brant, who was waiting in the garden. By putting it abruptly in his pocket he showed that he did not mean to discuss it. This relieved the girl, and she gave herself up to the delights that a walk with the parson meant for her.



## CHAPTER XX

### TRIUMPH

THE letters which Mr. Brant so unreservedly showed to Baillie indicated the general progress of Yordas. Under the brilliant tutelage of his mother he had developed rapidly in scholastic as well as social affairs. Attention was drawn to him from various influential quarters; everybody foretold a brilliant career.

All this Eleanor saw and realised far more clearly than the youth himself. In it the justification of her own life was at last clear. What had so long seemed irreparable mistake and failure now stretched out behind her but as the blank and stony desert which she had been compelled to traverse in order to reach this radiant goal. All struggle and exhaustion had not only gone, but were forgotten in the glorious prospect which so suddenly opened to her gaze. In this boy Yordas she had won.

He saw so clearly the effect of his successes on his mother, that Yordas was stimulated to his utmost effort. But conscious effort it hardly seemed in him, so clear was his intelligence, so vigorous his strength. He merely strode, but strode with all his powers. The joy of exertion, the stimulus of success, carried him buoyantly forward like a gale over Passpeth at his back. Socially, the youth's success was no doubt due directly to his mother. The woman was

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interesting in herself, and seemed but to claim her natural due when she shone in polite society. So plain had this now grown to Yordas that it threw more and more mystery around her past life. So prominently was it thrust upon him one night as they drove home from a concert to their lodgings, that in the exaltation of the moment Yordas spoke. He put his question abruptly in the jocular spirit which their easy confidences now always assumed, and Eleanor's answer conformed to it.

"Why didn't you gain all this before? What drove you back to the desert?"

"One demon, my boy—cash! You don't know what it is to be a woman."

Yordas showed plainly that he did not understand her.

She laughed.

"What had cash to do with the matter?"

She laughed louder, but then saw that he did not join her. So leaning forward she took his hand and became serious.

"Even yet, Yordas, you are a child. Don't you yet know that all this joy and beauty of the world can be got, just as it can be created, only by money? Like a peri I stood always at the gate in rags, penniless. I could not pay the toll; in every desperate effort I failed to earn it. You alone have earned it for me."

Yordas seemed to answer, but in his mind was the strangest confusion of ideas. It was true that he knew nothing whatever of money. Directly, even yet, he had scarce bought anything in his life, nor had known the desire to buy anything. What had the ideal harvest of life which he was now reaping to do with money? At present the problem was clearly beyond him, and he gave it up. Eleanor refrained from pressing it further. Nobody could

loathe the material side of it more completely than she did, or would more willingly take that aspect altogether for granted; so, recognising once again her failure to impress even the elements of her problem upon the imagination of Yordas, she gladly threw it off herself, and followed him radiantly into the poetic realms wherein every detail of his life was played.

Beyond giving the youth another subject for occasional reflection, upon him this incident had no effect. It threw light upon that remark of his father's, that had his mother married a wealthy person her life might have been passed in an unbroken course, but it appeared merely as a fact to him, with little or no ulterior significance. He had always accepted his father's statement, so his mother's confirmation was soon merged in it. His own life continued to pass in that transfiguring halo of his imagination. As a child reads a book containing facts wholly out of the range of its experience, sufficiently carried on by its own glowing interpretation of the story, so Yordas played his life. And in that, no doubt, lay the source of his strength. But this threw a whole secret department of existence upon Eleanor. To live upon the allowance which Mr. Brant was able to afford them was wholly impossible. This, of course, she had seen from the outset, and it was directly through her instrumentality that Yordas had competed for and gained his pecuniary rewards. But even these were not yet adequate to what Eleanor found to be their pressing needs. The prospects of Yordas were now admittedly of the highest, and to this future it was that the lady deemed it necessary to adjust their present life. So far as she was able she pointed this out to Yordas, and he readily acquiesced. He was himself so firmly convinced that he was to gather wealth to shower

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upon his mother that it was almost the same as if she had it now.

Little difficulties which inevitably occurred Eleanor surmounted in various ways, drawn from her former experience. A larger one which she knew loomed upon her she successfully ignored for a long time, but the day came when that also must be confronted. That day she passed in bed. In the evening of it, however, she went out and posted a letter. For three more days Yordas was in some distress on account of his mother. To pacify him she admitted she was ill, but resisted all his persuasions to consult a doctor. On the fourth day she proved her contention true, for she was restored suddenly to health—to health which seemed to surpass all she had enjoyed within the remembrance of Yordas. The change was, however, enough for him, and he accepted it without inquiry.

The explanation lay in a letter which Eleanor had received that morning from her brother, and which secretly she read numberless times throughout the day. It was a brief one, and ran thus—

“MY DEAR ELEANOR,—Odd that your letter forwarded by Sowerby should have reached me to-day, when after speculating for a month how to find you I was actually writing frankly to Brant. I am only too glad to be able to respond to you. I also have great news. I enclose a draft for a hundred pounds, and will be with you in a day or two.—  
Yours, B. A.”

“P.S.—As I don’t know what may be your wishes, perhaps it will be best if you inquire for me at the Claymore Hotel, say on Thursday evening.”

It chanced that Yordas was at the time engrossed in work, so that beyond the fact of his mother’s



radiant restoration he noticed little of her for the days that followed. On the appointed evening she went to the hotel, and found Bertram lighting a cigar in the hall as she entered. As it was fine, they took a cab and were driven towards Salisbury Crags. There they wandered about in long and animated conversation.

"Whatever has happened? Do tell me!" cried Eleanor, who had taken up all the time so far in laudation of Yordas. "You have not told me a word about yourself. Why, you wrote from Capple Rigg! What is the meaning?"

"Capple Rigg is my own—once more my country residence," smiled Bertram. "There I can entertain you and the brave Yordas—that is, when my new play is completed. For the present I am immersed."

"What, have you had a play accepted?"

"Haven't you seen? Slightly more than accepted. It is a tremendous success and is still running. Then there'll be America and— But isn't it atrocious? It's "The Churchwardens," which I wrote twelve years ago and could get nobody to look at! For twelve mortal years have I been kept out of my inheritance, and you out of your cash, by the fatuous imbecility of managers. Happily I've been able to make them pay for it. I have got royal terms."

"What! and have you bought back that dear old Capple Rigg?" cried Eleanor, as tears filled her eyes. "I cannot, cannot believe it. Oh, what can I say?"

For an hour they walked and talked there until twilight fell. Numberless details had to be discussed between them, for it was in Bertram's previous speculations that the whole of Eleanor's property as well as his own had been absorbed, and he showed grateful alacrity to restore, in any way she wished, all, and more than, he owed. The lady made no effort to disguise her excitement. As she knew Yordas



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was engaged till ten o'clock, an hour beyond which she never permitted him to study, Eleanor agreed to accompany her brother to celebrate the occasion properly.

"What does Brant think of all this?" was one of Bertram's questions just before they said good-bye.

"Oh, he is a dear good man," was the vivacious answer, "but supremely impossible."

Bertram smiled at her candour.

"Do you know your domestic arrangements suggest a very good subject?"

"What do you mean? For a play?"

He nodded and laughed.

"Use it by all means if it will increase our dividends." And they parted.

The clock had struck ten before Eleanor got home, so Yordas was awaiting her. He looked up from a book as she entered, and at once saw the peculiar lustre about her. He chanced to be reflective, but to this figure he could always respond.

" 'She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.' "

Such was his greeting as he closed his book. Eleanor stood silently to look at him. Yordas did not flinch, but, as he calmly received her gaze, it gradually came over him that there was something in his mother new to him. He saw her for an instant apart, and for that moment a sensation of his boyhood possessed him, that one with which he had seen her first at the open window in early morning, with which also he had heard her so fervently tell his fortune under the moon. But Yordas was now older, and the sensation meant more to him. To pass it off, he raised his arms and yawned.

"You look tired," she said. "What do you do to-morrow?"

"What I did to-day, yesterday, and the day before."

"I think not. You want a rest."

"As you will, mother."

"Really? Then I'll tell you what. We'll go to Dunbar."

The youth looked interrogatively and laughed. "Why Dunbar?"

"There was once a battle fought there."

"And have we to fight it over again?"

"No, only to celebrate again the victory. Oh, my boy, my boy, we have won!"

"What do you mean?" cried Yordas, now fully aroused.

"I will tell you." And Eleanor crouched at his feet.

In her narrative she told him more of her family history than he had known before, and his interest was immediately aroused. Her brother Bertram was vaguely remembered by Yordas, but, as a personality, this uncle now, in his mother's narrative, for the first time appeared to the young man's eyes.

Eleanor admitted that things did not at first go with Bertram quite as he had expected. Upon her own marriage to Mr. Brant, her brother had also contracted what was considered a suitable match. But in this matter Bertram had frankly acted from other motives than those which had actuated Eleanor, and the great wealth which his bride had nominally brought him vanished within a year of the wedding upon the bankruptcy of the young lady's father. Confessedly a dark period followed, which, Eleanor delicately hinted, had some small share in developing incidents in her own earlier life. Both Bertram and herself had through those long years set themselves strenuously to regain their position, but without success. The brother was left a struggling

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nondescript, widower and childless; the sister had come to see the spectral mockeries of a world which fate had so ironically hung just beyond her. But then, in her humiliation, Yordas rose, and "from that moment," declared the mother, with sincere and passionate animation, "the light has never left me. Slowly and steadily it has mounted higher, gilding one after another of the darkest recesses, putting flower-beds in place of snow-wreaths, lakes of crystal instead of Stygian pools, until now, my beloved, it shines cloudless in the upper sky upon all beneath it. Oh, my boy, how can I ever repay all this to you? All that it is usually the privilege of the parent to bestow upon the offspring you have showered upon me. The debt of love and gratitude is overwhelming. It would be insupportable towards anyone but you. To you it only becomes a glorious bond of devotion such as mother never felt in the world before."

Yordas was touched by all this, as well as interested. He listened with glowing attention to his mother as she connected her narrative with the present prosperity of her brother, and with his presence then in the town. When Eleanor's motive in alluring him into a holiday became thus apparent, the young man thoroughly threw his mind into her proposal, and they talked far into the night.

The next day proved favourable, and the three took train to Dunbar. The first half-hour had been sufficient to dispel all Eleanor's fears. Yordas was in one of his frankest moods, and appeared in the very light in which his mother had wished to present him. Bertram was favourably impressed. He kept Yordas in ceaseless conversation, nearly all of which, however, the man of the world used as the means of unfolding experiences of his own, and interpretations of his own, to this enthusiastic young mystic

from the hills. He seemed to do it, though, as much to elicit his companion's entertaining (or, as Bertram himself called it, Homeric) fervour, as to claim distinction for himself. So, in the course of the few hours they spent together, each formed at least a distinct conception of the other, and found no reason to regret their relationship.

It was therefore with some surprise that, when they were at home again, Yordas heard his mother suggest that for the present no news should be sent to Harthope of the incident. Vague hints at personal disagreements had to satisfy the youth, and he gave in.

As a matter of fact, nothing at all was said to Mr. Brant of the alteration in his wife's circumstances. Under Eleanor's auspices the intercourse with Capple Rigg was rapidly developed. She herself went to her old home two or three times before the next vacation, and on a favourable opportunity she also took Yordas to spend a Sunday there. It was on their return to Edinburgh from this visit, only a week or two before the time of their going to Harthope, that Yordas again mentioned his father in the matter.

"Not a word of anything to him yet," said Eleanor abruptly, seizing him by the two shoulders. She withstood his gaze.

"I canna gan' home on such terms," was the playful reply.

"My laddie, you must. Trust me."

Another long deep look was exchanged between them, and Yordas nodded in assent. Eleanor kissed his cheek lightly.

## CHAPTER XXI

### EDDIES

**B**UT it was only after long and harassing thought that Yordas succumbed to his mother's proposal. At last it seemed that there was, after all, so much in his new life wholly remote from his father's, that such a small portion of added reserve could give little extra weight to his conscience. On reaching Harthope he at first found the concealment still more easy than at a distance. The Brant temperament, itself inexpansive, reigned throughout the house in its grimmest form. The parson this time made no attempt at winning confidence.

It was a radiant summer, but this intangible barrier between the inmates threw a mist about the parsonage which obscured the sun. For hours by day and night Yordas began to stare into the vagueness, and repeatedly made up his mind that it should be dispelled. But two or three words with his mother as repeatedly vanquished him. He tried to reason of the separation, to prove that in reality it did not exist, that under the flimsiest exterior all was as it had been before; but the next instant he would become aware of the magic circle that paralysed his most strenuous efforts. He even blamed his father. He felt assured that one word from him and all the chimerical estrangement would instantly vanish.

The effect of all this unrest was plain in Yordas.



Where his whole nature was not in play he withered. Others as well as Baillie noticed the change in his face on Sundays. It seemed especially noticeable then. Martha was the first to give words to it. On coming in from church one lovely evening she found a favourable opportunity of drawing the young man aside. She was exceeded by no one in profound devotion to Yordas, and in courage she certainly surpassed them all.

"My lad, what ails you?" she asked, fearlessly staring at him.

Yordas tried to laugh as he protested he was well.

"Nay, you're not that, as anybody can see with one eye open. You know for years I was a mother to you, though another is now. Tell me, love, what there is I can do for you?"

"My dear old Martha," exclaimed the other warmly, "I know you'd do anything in the world for me, and there's nothing in the world I wouldn't ask you to do if you could help me. But there is nothing the matter. I want no help."

The woman shook her head sadly.

"Ay, but dinna tell me. I know better. I'm not surprised. I've no blame for you. I know what those towns are. They'd addle the head o' Saint Paul hisselsn if he had to come among 'em. Talk to your father. He'll put you raight. Now, do."

"Then you ought to want help," Martha continued more sternly, in reply to the youth's further evasion. "Religion's no' the thing to men 'at it is to women. Your father even 'ed his doubts when he was young, as he's telled me, and if *he* 'ed, I'm inclined to think that a man cannot be a raight good man without 'em. God knows what you can find to doubt about, for t' words are as plain as t' crags on th' hillside i' sunset, to my reading. But they call you the lords o' t' creation, so I suppose there mun be summat in it

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beyond me. Now, do be a good lad, and just go to your father before yon sun gets off t' Cleugh and have it fair out. Never let it be said that Mr. Brant's own son turned atheist."

Now that Martha so distinctly revealed the quality of her suspicions, Yordas saw in them the means of freeing himself from her importunity, although it was the first moment in his life that the thought of religious doubts had occurred to him.

"I can't talk to father about it, Martha," he said, "but when I am able I will write."

With this the woman had to be content, in spite of all her further remonstrances, and Yordas escaped. But although she observed the strictest confidence, birds seemed to pick up the notion that had enlightened Martha, and the word "atheist" spread over hill and dale in explanation of the altered behaviour and appearance of the parson's son.

The word really assisted Yordas, and even suggested a clue to the perplexities that puzzled himself. The religion which his father had taught him, or rather fed him with, from his earliest moments, had never yet consciously detached itself from his everyday senses. But perhaps a man might be an atheist without himself being aware of the fact? The thought startled Yordas. Was that indeed the subtle cause of this unfathomable alienation from his father? With this altogether novel speculation he did not seek Mr. Brant as Martha had entreated, but drew away in solitude from the house and mounted the Snear, the steep green slope on the shaded side of the valley. Upon reaching the summit the last fierce rays of the sun dazzled him, and he turned abruptly round. He looked eastward for a few minutes until the orb had sunk, then faced about again. In the glow that still overspread the hilltops, scarce a hundred yards away, he saw a figure hurrying off with back towards

him. Only then he first recalled that he had heard a sound in the grass directly the sun had dazzled him, not heeded at the moment but now connected with the retreating figure. More by instinct than recognition he knew that it was Baillie. The place and the hour would have summoned her there, even if she had not so visibly presented herself. He set off at a run to catch her up. That wonderful light on the hilltops, that solemn radiant roof overhead, the spring of his foot upon the bent-grass—in an instant Yordas was a boy again.

"Why do you run away from me? Hold!" he cried whilst still some yards off.

Baillie stopped immediately.

"Do you too think me an atheist, Baillie?" he went on between light and serious. "What on earth is an atheist? I thought it was the man that said in his heart there is nae God. Tell me, am I such a fool?"

"I never thought it," returned the girl, now quite collected.

"Then why do you flee?"

"I was not fleeing. I'm only going home. I thought you didn't want to see me."

Yordas reflected an instant.

"Oh, that's it," laughed he. "You were there in the sunbeams? You dazzled me. I never saw you at all. Do you believe it?"

"Certainly," she smiled, "if you tell me so."

"But how could you get up here first? You won't deny that you ran away from the church, at anyrate. I wanted to speak to you when we got out."

"I have not been to the church to-night."

Then Yordas stared fully in her face and was startled by the strange person he found there. This was not Baillie at all. This was not the old comrade he had been just pursuing across the bent, but a

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good-looking young woman unknown to him, and to whom he had so clumsily betrayed his ignorance of the fact whether she was or was not in the church less than an hour ago. In a moment she saw his face alter, saw the old light of boyish confidence vanish as completely as if hidden by a veil, and Baillie's own heart was clouded with it. A moment's uneasy silence fell between them, a silence filled only by the echoing croon of a ring-dove from nobody knew where. But both heard it, and the silly bird redeemed the situation. As its tale was repeated Yordas joined in the words, instead of continuing the step he had taken.

"Take two, Taffy—  
Take two coos, Taffy—  
Take *two* coos, Taffy—  
Take"—

"He always ends with 'take,'" observed Baillie.

"Nearly always. You were the first to tell me that."

Nothing this time filled the silence, but neither moved. Each was less uneasy.

"Then you are, you must be the same Baillie. It is I that am altered," exclaimed Yordas. "I didn't know you. How could I know you? I don't know even my own father. . . . Why, that's just it! Martha must be right. I'm an atheist. What is an atheist, Baillie? Isn't it exactly a man that doesn't know his own father? Do speak!"

"I should think such a man might become an atheist," said she; "especially if his father was Mr. Brant."

"Then how am I to escape my fate?" Yordas put his question with that fixed look which he had set on her before.

"By getting to know your father, of course," said the girl, with a laugh to parry her restraint.



"Yes I suppose that is the way," was the blunt retort; and, without so much as a farewell, Yordas left her there in the bent.

Baillie calmly watched him, and when he sat down on the ridge overlooking the Harthope valley she went on her way.

Many a time Yordas had sat here on an evening such as this, but never with just this sensation. That momentary ray of boyhood had left him, and again the twilight had settled down. All the universe became a blank. Outlines acquired no solemn suggestion from obscurity; no fresh wonders arose that day concealed. As a refuge from mere oblivion he soon went down. But he had no sense of going home. He heard music as he approached the house, and walked outside to listen to it. Whilst doing so, a figure approached him which he supposed to be that of his father, but which, to his relief, proved to be Gideon Thew.

"Mr. Yordas, I have been waiting to speak to you."

"Mister, Gideon! What's this?"

"Will you walk with me to the bridge?"

Glad of the interruption, Yordas went.

"You'll mind showing me yon gravestone?" began Thew at once.

"What gravestone?"

"Of Baillie Gourlock that was lost at the ford."

"Why, of course, and the tale I told. But it occurred in another world."

"Ay, I think so." And they walked on a little way in silence.

"Will you tell me one thing?" suddenly burst out Gideon, startling his companion from the reverie into which he had immediately fallen.

"Anything you like to ask."

"Did you go up yon hill to-night on purpose to meet Baillie?"



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With that question the solution of the whole mystery flashed on Yordas. By the sudden ray all his past conception of Gideon was presented to him anew. His answer, therefore, was an indirect one.

"Now I see, Gideon," said he.

"I know you'll tell me the truth," pursued the other. "It's all I ask for. But I must know it."

"You shall know it so far as I can tell it you. To begin with, I had no notion of Baillie's being on the hill when I went up there. I didn't even see her when I got there, although she must have been only a yard or two away. Afterwards I saw her and spoke to her, but we were like strangers to each other. I'm like a stranger to everybody here. You are in love with Baillie? You thought I came here to rob you of her? Is that it?"

Gideon bluntly assented.

"Yes, now I see it," Yordas went on with reckless impulsiveness. "You have really been in love with her for years, and you have thought that I stood in the road between you! . . . With Baillie! Why, she has been a sister to me. We lived all our life together until the last few years, and you must know that since I left home we have lived as far as you and I asunder. Baillie! . . . The Baillie that I knew was part of my home, of my existence, like the bracken, the sandpiper, the star that used to set behind the Snear. But with them she too has gone. I'm a stranger to them all. Have no fear of my getting in your way, Gideon," concluded Yordas, with an ironical laugh.

"Are you no' happy yonder?" asked the other in surprise.

"Oh ay, happy enough. So happy that you need not be afraid of my coming here again very soon to interfere with your happiness. I've chosen another

world, and I'll keep to it. You keep hold of yours. Good-night, Gideon." Without waiting to hear an adieu, Yordas was gone.

But, however mystified, Thew was content. Hugging his own comfort, he had no room to contemplate the disquiet of another. Everything joined to convince him that Yordas had spoken the truth, and a fierce glow of triumph gradually arose and illumined the dusky road which he had to traverse on his way to Bridgend. He would doubt no more.

In the other direction the road had become darker for Yordas. The name under which Martha had stigmatised his ailment became the unceasing burden of the water which babbled over the stones at his side. The two brief conversations he had had, by imparting still fresh outline to the clouds which oppressed him, seemed to have added to their weight. But this was counterbalanced by the additional consciousness with which he stared into the gloom. It was not in mere listless depression that he looked. There was just the first sough of a wind of revolt rising in his soul.

His mother still played when he reached the parsonage. On going in he found her alone. With her hand still running on the keys she looked round at him, and her eyebrows rose.

"What is wrong?" she said softly.

"The whole nature of things."

"But only in uncongenial places," returned Eleanor, looking at her fingers now as they still dallied with the solemn harmonies.

"Mother!"

Startled, she looked up and met her son's face at her shoulder.

"And ought home to be an uncongenial place to me—such a home as mine was?"

"Hush! It was to me before you. All, and

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far more than all, that you suffer, I have suffered first. Let my agony serve for you also, Yordas. Be strong, my boy."

"But why is it uncongenial? What wrong have I done? . . . I cannot stand it. I will go now and ask my father."

With one word she was at the door beside him, with his hands clasped between her own. The expression of her eyes held him spellbound. She drew him back to a couch, where she sat down beside him.

"Will you too leave me, Yordas?"

"Why should I leave you? Can we not all be one?"

"It is impossible."

"It is not, cannot be, impossible."

"Hear me, my beloved boy. Should I have left husband, child, and hearth, if any unity could have been established? I tore my heart out when I did it, in order that reason and life itself should not be shattered. No argument can help us. It is a difference of soul. The two in this life cannot be reconciled."

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because some things you cannot understand until you are old enough."

"I cannot understand them now."

"But you soon will, if you trust me."

"By becoming a stranger here?"

"No, not for ever a stranger. Only whilst your wings are growing. Attain your full growth, and this life also will be absorbed into your own."

"But you say the two cannot be reconciled."

"No. By conquest only. One must be supreme."

"And our weapons are of gold?" asked Yordas ironically.

"Of gold," said Eleanor candidly.

"I wish there had been another key to the universe. This one does not satisfy me."

"Of course not, you foolish laddie," resumed the mother, fondling his hand. "Who hugs a key? Of what worth is it but for what it opens to? Accept a key of iron and it will give you a hermit's cell. Forge one of gold and the universe flies open before you. All that the world has prayed, loved, toiled and fought for, becomes yours. Why, do you tire already? You haven't even got the key yet. But you are forging it nobly. Go forward valiantly and everything is yours."

Yordas kept his eyes fixed on his mother. Her mature beauty became radiant as she spoke, and it was to this exclusively that his imagination was carried, and to which his soul irresistibly turned. Before it the old enthusiastic devotion arose in him, and the clouds of homelessness and waning admirations faded into vague mists over the horizon. Bowing his head in subjection to this irresistible emotion, he raised the fair hand which held his own hand captive, and pressed it long and warmly to his lips.

But this triumph disturbed Eleanor. She had supposed his progress more complete. A day or two later, accordingly, she privately suggested to Yordas that they should spend part of their vacation in travel, as she had before leaving Edinburgh unsuccessfully proposed. This time she met with immediate approval, and it was left for her to disclose the project to Mr. Brant, which was done with characteristic promptitude. A day for departure was fixed.

The parson had not been without his own reflections during that unquiet holiday, and he was glad of the proposal. Although he had even rigidly refrained from any attempt at intimate communication with his son, he had given glimpses of the old pathetic tenderness towards him which had not escaped

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Yordas. In general the parson's behaviour had been unflinchingly stoical. He had gone about his homely duties with oppressive regularity — oppressive to Yordas, who had watched them furtively with a longing to take part. The desire was only curbed by a mingled sensation of bashfulness under his mother's eye, and timidity at the risk of encountering his father at too close quarters. After that Sunday night the youth avoided these sights which moved him so strongly.

But on the very evening before he was to leave Harthope, he unexpectedly came upon his father gathering the sheep for change of pasture. Without an abrupt turn, which would have stabbed both of them, escape was impossible. So Yordas at once gave in. The bark of the dog, and the parson's voice directing it, which broke the quiet, thrilled him as few notes could. Before he was aware, he himself shouted, and with that deliverance he threw himself into the old familiar part with zest. For some days the weather had been broken, rain flung by a wild west wind having swept away the summer heat; but it had cleared that afternoon, and the wind fallen, so that the valley at this hour was still and full of fragrance. Fine sombre clouds, tinged by the sun in places, floated calmly above the hills in an atmosphere intensely clear, and imparted some of their buoyancy to the spirit of Yordas. He made no attempt to resist the influence. He drew deep breaths, and his step was lightened. When the last sheep had crossed the foot-bridge he and his father came together, and then they first spoke. As Mr. Brant fastened the gate he looked up and met the other's eyes turned frankly upon him. The parson's soul rose in him.

"A breath of old times," smiled Yordas, to cover the fierce throbbing of his heart.



"Of all times, Yordas," was the response, and there was a pause. "Be not disheartened, my boy," then continued the father. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. You know my favourite quotation, 'No man became a saint in his sleep.' By activities alone can the soul find its proper strength and its proper level. Do not pause. The night cometh. Idleness, vice, and crime alone are the devil's weapons. Brandish all else."

For a second the young man was stunned by the unexpectedness of the reply. Mr. Brant saw it, knew it, for all the perplexities of his son were clear to him. He therefore had to take up the word as they turned to walk homewards.

"Oh, we are frail mortals! I who would spare you all anxiety add to your distresses. What is my personal agony, boy, seems to you disapprobation and estrangement. Let me seize this moment, whilst I am able, to clear the air for you. I disapprove of nothing you have done. I love you as I have always loved you. This life of ours must be a choice for every one of us. Mere submission is not for the human intellect, for that is not a choosing. Ignorance and inexperience cannot choose, for there is only one way before them. With you it is different, and my parting injunction to you is to remember that your life is a choice and not a submission; an exertion of independent strength and not a resignation to external circumstance. My outward life I would impose on no man."

"But the essence of it I can instil into that other life?" cried Yordas eagerly. "They can be reconciled?"

"You will see. Of course *I* think not," added Mr. Brant, almost jocularly. "But from my point of view it is I that instil the essence of yours into mine. Do not mistake sensation for sensibility, and do not

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measure the fulness of life by the degree to which it is inflated. You have left me far behind in reading, but I suppose we may still meet in Milton. You remember what you used to recite to me at the clipping—

‘To measure life learn thou betimes, and know  
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way.’”

As they both looked up, their eyes fell together upon Eleanor who was walking towards them. By the time they reached her another subject of conversation engaged them, and the three reached the parsonage in company. But Yordas took his departure the next day in a serener frame of mind. No, he did not think he was an atheist. His face seemed to say so to Martha as he waved a last adieu to her, and she turned to Mr. Brant with her eyes full.

“Well, it caps all that iver I saw. If he goes the way of yond I shall be ’most ready to turn an atheist myseln.”

The parson smiled at this first glimpse of Martha’s private reflections, and they went about their work without further comment.

## CHAPTER XXII

### ALLEGIANCE

THE gleam of hope which had sprung from those few words with his father illuminated the universe for Yordas. He insisted upon jumping down at the Bridgend to say good-bye to Gideon, and he gave the latter's hand such a grip at parting as to leave no room for misconstruction of the hint. Long after the vehicle had disappeared beyond the Edge, Thew still stood motionless in the sunshine, and that very evening he journeyed up the dale.

Eleanor's aspirations took her farther, and a few days later she was reposing in an upland hotel in Tyrol. The expedition had affected Yordas profoundly, for it was his first journey abroad, and oddly enough at the outset he took most of his walks alone. When in company with his mother, he walked speechless. Eleanor was thinking of this bit of his character between the lines of a book she was reading in her wicker chair in the sun, and with a self-satisfied smile raised her eyes to the sublime Alpine prospect before her. As she did so, a voice exclaimed but a few yards away—

"It is Mrs. Brant, father."

And Eleanor turned to recognise two Edinburgh friends, Dr. Burnside and his daughter Marjorie.

It was with supreme astonishment that Yordas returned a short time later to find his mother and

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Marjorie together in animated conversation. Though free from ill-bred restraint, the young man was always inclined to reserve in female society, especially when it was that of the young, vivacious, and beautiful. Dr. Burnside's daughter could securely claim all these high qualities, so that, coming into her presence so unexpectedly, Yordas was smitten dumb. The effect was so obvious that Marjorie very soon found an opportunity of escape. Eleanor's brow lowered.

"Yordas, this will not do," she said firmly. "With me, behave as you will, but in polite society all gentlemen restrain their humours."

The other instantly craved pardon and promised to make amends.

After dinner that same evening he was able to do it. He began with a frank apology for his ill-behaviour, with such artless sincerity that Miss Burnside laughed. She admitted that the apology made her more uncomfortable than its cause.

"I was the intruder, Mr. Brant," she concluded, "and had, besides, the unfair advantage of vacancy. Whilst you—confess, you had been maturing a sonnet?"

"I can't claim that refuge," said Yordas. "I've been thinking about it since you left us, and I can trace it only to the burden of these hills."

"Burden! Do they oppress you?" asked Marjorie in surprise.

"I suppose they do, since they drive me into silence and solitude."

"That is only from overwork," said the young lady kindly. "Wait until you've had a month's rest and you'll find the effect different. The doctor would call it morbid. We shall have to consult him if it goes on."

"What's that? Consult whom?" cried the doctor,

who at that moment came up. "What is the abstruse subject of inquiry?"

"Mr. Brant's health. He won't admit that he writes poetry, and he finds these mountains a burden to his soul."

"Then he's what I always thought him, a sensible young man," exclaimed the dignified physician, as he laid a hand upon one shoulder of his friend. "And you, Marchie, are an impertinent young minx. Come, Brant, light, and we will have a stroll."

Yordas declined the cigar, but allowed himself to be led away by the doctor.

"My boy, you must learn billiards," began the elder, when they were under the quiet twilight sky. "There is no relaxation like it for a man of science. It is not to be compared with that abominable antediluvian atrocity of chess."

"I have not the smallest inclination to either," laughed Yordas.

"Probably, but I am telling you you ought to have. There is no diversion that so revives the jaded faculties of a rational man as billiards. There's nothing emotional and nothing drivelling about it. What stroke of art can ravish the eye like that wondrous pathway round the firmament? What music thrill the brain like those cold vestal kisses on the sly? Now, *that* might make a man poetical. Do you stay here?"

"For a week or two, I expect."

"Then that will do. We can make a commencement."

"But I have not come here to learn billiards, doctor."

"You evidently have. There is a fate in these things. Your mother will be charmed with Marjorie. You will be able to rescue me. Come and begin."

Kindly as Yordas felt towards Dr. Burnside, he was



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not the man he would be led to select as a confessor. So of his own reflections he said nothing. He kept up the conversation in a half-humorous tone, mindful of his afternoon blunder, as they went to the billiard-room. There he was kept by the doctor till midnight. By that time Yordas had beaten the doctor on his own ground and won a game. The physician had been showing irritation at his pupil's strokes through the course of it, and in face of his defeat admitted he was sleepy.

"You're a humbug, Brant," he said as they parted. "We'll have it out another time."

In a few days Dr. Burnside pronounced Yordas a genius, in terms of billiards, and his regard rose to an extravagant height.

The young man too was changed. The physician's prescription had worked with marvellous efficacy. Solitary walks were abandoned; the burden of the hills was removed. The success of Eleanor's diplomacy was complete, and she showed unmistakably how she received it. For three weeks she basked in the radiance of this added triumph, and now, as it had turned out, in no way regretting the lost week or two at Harthope. It had at least proved to her that that ridiculous pastoral dream of her son's was at length exploded, had revealed its own wild divergence from practical life, and was relegated to its own proper poetical background.

But, before that critical visit, the variable moods of Yordas had not escaped his mother. She was well aware that he had reached an age when the power of her own fascination upon him, and of the mere glamour of civilised life, must wane before a passion still more vital. Any day she must be prepared to find him in love. In her most ambitious moments Eleanor had never been depraved. In this most vital of all functions she was nothing but exalted and

sincere. How often had she thought of that rude shepherd's daughter and shuddered, because of the very temptation of her! But at last it was remote; now she could laugh. She had succumbed to no ignoble schemes to obtain wealth merely. Nothing but love would content Yordas; love under proper conditions he must have. Wealth was assured to his own exertions. Hence it came that Eleanor was in Tyrol.

To the innocent Yordas all was accidental, and he turned homewards in the best of humours with the fates. The freedom of hotel and holiday life had come to his temperament as a revelation, and presented the refinements of polite life in a very alluring guise to one of his primitive tastes. He breathed fully again. He saw life once more as a whole, and not as broken up into tantalising irreconcilable fragments between which he could not decide. He remembered Martha's atheism with a smile, and from his new altitude at once discerned what share the atmosphere of Harthope had had in his depressions. "Idleness, vice, and crime" were even his father's sole exceptions. So far as he could judge he had not yet felt any inclination to any one of them. He accepted his career strenuously, and pursued it with his might, not even shunning billiards.

When another vacation presented itself Yordas had not a moment's hesitation. It was the Christmas one, but it should not be spent at Harthope. Happily though (as he felt), it was a terrific winter, roads for leagues being impassable for snow, so that his decision found a specious veil. But for himself Yordas needed no veils. At last he could accept life as he found it, although it was a little time longer before he discovered the stroke of alchemy through which the differing elements had been combined in his soul.

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The snow had not prevented Eleanor and her son spending part of their time in London with Mr. Arncliffe in his flat. They returned to Edinburgh in time for an assembly at Dr. Burnside's to celebrate his daughter's birthday. It proved a most successful affair, and on reaching home Yordas made no secret of his enjoyment. He could scarcely have done so had he wished, for joy invested his very figure like a halo. Eleanor quivered with ecstasy as she lay back to look at him whilst they spent a few minutes in review before retiring. The young man stood before the fireplace and talked. Idly he turned to the mantelpiece and still talked. On facing his mother sharply, to respond to something she had said, his fingers unconsciously twirled a bit of paper they had picked up. Both still laughed and talked continuously. After saying something incisive, Eleanor leapt up.

"Well, I shall go."

"And I."

Yordas had lowered his eyes with a smile and what appeared a blush. His mother came up to kiss him, but suddenly stopped. With the movement her features as abruptly altered.

"What is the matter?" she said.

The other held out the paper on which his eyes had been resting. There was handwriting upon it—his father's hand. Eleanor took it from him, and read what he had involuntarily read, although she knew it—

"MY DEAR WIFE,—Here is the money. I can send you forty pounds this time. Would it were eighty! I know the impossibility of living in civilisation upon such sums as I am accustomed to handle, and it troubles me to think that the boy should have to devote his well-earned rewards to the demands of



mere existence when presently he will need them so much more. I trust that next time I shall be able to send even a little more. God bless you both.—  
Your, ANTHONY BRANT."

Yordas in his evening attire and Eleanor in hers looked at each other. The flush of excitement had died out of both.

"What is it?" demanded the mother again in an anxious voice.

"Mere existence!"

Eleanor's heart visibly throbbed.

"Do you mean to say that we receive money from my father?"

"Why, of course. How could it be otherwise?" And Eleanor quickly sketched the original arrangement between herself and her husband.

"It is horrible," cried Yordas, his face undergoing still further change, which startled Eleanor.

"But, my dear boy, can't you see the absolute necessity of it? How can we refuse money from him?"

"How can we take it!" he retorted, looking at his coat with as ghastly an expression as if it were steeped in the blood of Nessus.

"But, Yordas, you must have known this before," said Eleanor, in a tone touched by appeal.

"I certainly did not know it. I had never thought of it. The subject has never crossed my mind."

His face continued to sear the conscience of Eleanor, and, as if to hide herself from the agony of it, she drew closer to him. But her touch had no effect on him. He certainly made no attempt to accept or return the caress she offered. In a few seconds he even drew back to avoid it, and Eleanor shivered. That rigidity of the muscles transfixed her self-love like steel, and reminded her of the weapons of his father. But this rebuff could be met by no

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thrill of anger. Her whole soul bowed before it. It was this, as she moved, that Yordas suddenly realised, and he at once relented.

"No, it is not your fault, mother," he exclaimed, with a revulsion of feeling. "You could not have done otherwise. I do not blame you for it. I am the fool. I am the heartless idiot. Oh, it is horrible! . . . Mere existence! Just look at this coat, this shirt, these"—

"But, darling"—

"Out of my father's money, whilst he"—

"No, my beloved boy, not one or other out of your father's money," cried Eleanor more boldly. "He was perfectly frank with me. Do you think I could have taken it had he been in want? He promised me that he would not deny himself his books"—

"For Heaven's sake spare me, mother!" cried Yordas. "There are books which from my boyhood he has denied himself, any one of which I suppose this coat would buy. But, never mind. Let us go. Good-night, or morning."

Eleanor did not like this termination, but he warded off all her efforts to prolong the discussion, and she had eventually to give in. It was a long time before either was at rest.

Remote as it appeared, this conversation and the discovery which had led to it were the means of Yordas learning more of his subjection to Marjorie, and with it the cause of his renewed zeal for life. As a first step, he himself wrote to his father, explaining fully their altered circumstances, and pointing out the impossibility of their receiving money from him, above all as a contribution to a course of life which he thought needless if not improper. It was affectionately, even tenderly, worded, and elicited such reply as Yordas expected. But the



incident was a physical blow to him, and no sophistry could rid him of the sensation that it was given him by his mother. The next time he met Marjorie, he found himself regarding her solely in contradistinction to his mother. The effect would have been ludicrous to him, if it had not engaged his emotions so completely. But, his eyes once opened, he was startled to find how entirely Marjorie had stepped into the place of his mother, and the next few months were occupied in adjusting himself to this novel experience. Eleanor watched the process with severe composure, if with less exhilaration than she had expected.

At length the day came upon which Yordas considered the process completed, and that evening, just after the dinner-hour, found him at the door of Dr. Burnside's residence, as their degree of familiarity now warranted. But the young man's agitation betokened rather a first professional consultation, with his own tenure of life hanging upon the renowned opinion. Yordas was taken into the physician's private room, and had to wait some time. But at length there was the footstep, and the visitor stood with such composure as we may haply command when waiting to be shot. Dr. Burnside entered, cried "Come along!" then stopped.

"Why aren't you dressed, man? . . . Sit down. You're ill." The doctor softened in an instant.

"No, I'm not ill," stammered Yordas, "if I could but command my tongue. I've just got private information, it'll be announced in the morning. I've got the Medal."

"Is that all?" laughed the doctor. "What a sense of proportion! But forgive me, lad. I was once young, although it's a good time since. A thousand congratulations!"

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"I only came to ask you if I might tell it to Miss Burnside."

"Why, of course. What's all this"— But checking himself, the speaker looked grave. "Oh, that's it!"

"I only got it for her. May I lay it at her feet?"

"Ho, ho! This is somewhat peremptory. My dear fellow, you have chosen an odd time for propounding such a matter. But run home and change your toggery. I've somebody here you must meet."

"I can meet nobody to-night."

"You must. It is my condition precedent. Tell them to put you in here when you come back."

The doctor rang, and was gone. Yordas withdrew more calmly.

He decided not to return. He felt depressed, vanquished. For half an hour he wandered aimlessly about the pavements, defeated in every aim of life, outcast from every hope. Then jumping into a cab to redeem the lost moments, he was quickly in his own chamber. His mother was absent. He dressed himself with trembling impetuosity, and was once more on the doctor's threshold, in the silence of his private room. He had not to wait long this time.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### OLD TRACKS

DR. BURNSIDE entered and held Yordas by the hand.

"I wanted her to look elsewhere. I had a match of distinction for her."

"So I should have thought," said the visitor, who had now some control over himself. "It is sufficient. You must pardon my presumption. In any case my action is premature. I have no means, no position to offer. I only thought"—

"Thought what?" asked the doctor with singular composure, verging no doubt on covert amusement.

"That the smallest hope of ever being loved by Miss Burnside would have redoubled my strength to acquire these means and to gain this position."

"But you withdraw? You will be content with smaller ambitions?"

"Certainly."

"Well, Yordas, you are the most reasonable suitor I have yet had to deal with." And the doctor burst into a laugh. "Unfortunately the world of women is not so easily managed, my boy," he proceeded. "Didn't you observe I said that I *wanted* her to look elsewhere, that I *had* a match of distinction for her? It is now some time since I abandoned the project. The girl refuses to second me. So far as I know, the path is clear. By all means try your fate.

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Should you prosper, of course we shall have to discuss more deeply. Are you content?"

Yordas pressed the doctor's hand gratefully, and they went to join the company elsewhere.

A new power was in the young aspirant that night, which invested him with no accession of elegance merely but with a wholly altered mien. He seemed to have graduated in one brief hour in some subtle faculty of manhood. Nothing but a dignified modesty could ever illumine his clear grey eyes in a company so far beyond anything to which he could yet really feel to belong; but it was the modesty of natural forces, reliant upon independent energy and arrogating nothing but its own. Mere power of imagination gave him a certain touch with every aspect of life, and always at its abstract and most exalted point.

This high geniality had not only survived all his recent experiences, but had even expanded under them. He himself was now quite aware that the apparent difficulties at Harthope were superficial merely, and in no way the result of any radical change in himself. Indeed, whilst enlightening him on this point, it had inspired him with profound surprise to find how the development of his feeling towards Miss Burnside had seemed to act upon his visions of the parsonage, to embrace them too, as it were, with its own peculiar light.

But Yordas was engaged in none of these reflections to-night. He found a delight in giving himself up wholly to the scene in which he was placed. The doctor was frankly surprised. He had expected to find the youth unmanageable, clogged by the load of his sentimental reserves. But this was not the nature of young Brant. Love, such as he knew it, unloosed instead of restraining his general faculties, led him to dazzling heights he had had no

knowledge of before. Dr. Burnside presented his protégé with startling success, and the hours proceeded gallantly for all.

It was after triumphs, therefore, of a peculiarly exhilarating sort that Yordas at last found himself at the point of which he had never lost sight. As a return, no doubt the doctor had helped him to this end, so the opportunity was complete. Flying passages he had had with Marjorie before, but as to what the present one meant neither was in doubt.

"You alone have avoided me, Miss Burnside. What have I done?"

"I hardly know you," was the arch reply.

"Do explain to me your meaning. I have expended every atom of my brains and have only caught you that I might have a minute or two's rest. How am I changed?"

"In every way I can imagine."

"Then it is all through you."

"Oh, thank you! I am proud to know it."

There was something piquant in the young lady's tone, which made Yordas pause, but her face refused an answer.

"If, at least, you approve of the change," he proceeded, lowering his eyes; "if it corresponds outwardly with the change of which I am conscious within. But it can't," he added merrily. "It would have made an archangel of me."

"Being only an angel before?"

He nodded, but then abandoned his smile.

"Yes, an angel only. I was that by virtue of the capacity within me, a capacious void though it was. That credit I may lay claim to. The rest, Miss Burnside, I attribute to you. May I tell you what I feel it to be?"

"I can see without your telling. There is no



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vacuity about you now, I assure you. I must have transferred the whole of my powers to you, though, for I am bitterly conscious of the—what is it?—capacious void, myself. I am sorry I was so liberal.”

“Are you really sorry? Do you repent of having made me your debtor?” asked he in a sober tone.

Well-bred pleasantry never came easily to Yordas, and just now he knew that moments were precious.

“Only for my own loss,” she replied in her airiest manner. “But pray don’t feel yourself a debtor. Whatever I gave you was a gift, and I beg you to keep it. I don’t at all want it back.”

“But I hope you do. Such gifts can never be sundered from the giver, can never be other than a debt. If they do ever become so, woe unto the wretch that has received them. They turn to a fire in his breast, not for warmth but destruction. You would never voluntarily give that to the meanest creature.”

“Still less, you think, to one of particular distinction?” smiled she benignly.

“Yes, of particular distinction,” he returned fearlessly. “Anyone may claim distinction who feels as I feel, for the merit is not his own; the compliment is not paid to himself but to the power without him. Forgive me, Miss Burnside, if I am earnest and serious. I only came here to-night for these few minutes’ speech with you. It is you that have given me the distinction. I am compelled to tell it you. You will permit me to tell you so?”

In face of his glow of emotion the academical success he had meant to present to her seemed so paltry that he dared not mention it. By offering his soul he offered everything.

“Certainly I thank you for it, Mr. Brant. I am very glad to know it.” But this calm acceptance was not what he wanted. His eyes again fell before her

pitiless composure. He made another attempt, but with no more apparent impression. Marjorie's colour never turned; her pulse showed no sign of disturbance. Evidently she did not mean to assist him. So he could get no further. He knew quite well that he had said nothing of what he intended to say; at anyrate, not at all in the way that he had meant to say it. Directly this feeling came upon him he was dumb, and not long afterwards he escaped. On getting home he fell immediately into his mother's embraces.

She also during the evening had learned of his success, and nothing could exceed the vehemence of her pleasure. Here at least was no disguise, no repression, and the mere exuberance of human feeling at first did something to appease the hunger of Yordas. But he rapidly recoiled from it. Of late he frequently had recoiled from his mother's caresses, but never so completely as now. She at anyrate understood it, if he did not, and she bowed content.

The next morning he was prepared for her suggestion that they should go into Yorkshire, and immediately agreed. Mr. Arncliffe seemed to receive them with especial cordiality, although he confessed he was at work. Not half an hour after their arrival he sought a few words with Eleanor alone.

"It goes amazingly well," he said.

"The new play? . . . Is it *the* one?"

Bertram nodded and fell into thought.

"Not a word to him about it," said Eleanor.

"Have no fear. But you have come most opportunely. I was just wanting a talk with him. It's a bit difficult to keep up the proper steam of convictions. He'll bring the wind on the heath. A few of his turns will put all right. By the bye, Grimston is much taken with the part, and I want the boy to meet him."

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"Dangerous," observed Eleanor.

"Not in the least. It'll be best here. I'll let you know when."

"Who takes the clergyman?"

"The great Guy himself," smiled Bertram complacently—"idiot though he is."

In talk at dinner, though, Yordas immediately agreed to continue their journey to London, and as his uncle judged the boy to be in an extremely favourable condition for the required purposes, they all set off next day and were by the evening in the radiance of Mr. Arncliffe's flat. Two days were passed there.

When again in Edinburgh, Yordas found the expedition had done him good. He had quite recovered that sense of aggressiveness without which he found his present life flagged, and which had been disordered by the various agitations he had recently gone through. The world was again a stage, and not a schoolroom, which it always became to him when pugnacity waned. It was in his first meeting with Miss Burnside that this full sense of freedom was revealed. In spite of that frustrate passage between them they met in gayest mood. Each was convinced that some reasonable change in the other gave the deliverance. Marjorie had in the meantime heard of Mr. Brant's academical distinction, and showered her congratulations upon him unasked. The eyes of Yordas sparkled as he laughed.

"That was what I came the other night to thank you for," said he significantly. "It is all yours."

"Oh, thank *you* so much," cried she in delight; and in an exchange of glances the whole void was spanned.

That night Yordas left in a frame of mind to satisfy even his mother. It seemed to put his world in order again in a moment, but, as was usual at such moments,

his thoughts travelled to his father. In spite of the pathetic solitude in which the figure rose, he could in that mood view it with composure. Unclouded affection formed its own atmosphere to soothe and gratify his eyes, and to transfigure so much even of what had agitated the past. But never since the creation of the gulf had he felt such serenity as now. He could look the lonely figure fearlessly in the eyes; he could long to disclose to it all the triumph of his mind. His one success had been communicated by letter to the parsonage, but of the other he delayed to write. Nevertheless it was to his father that in his mind he brought it. He had not spoken a word to his mother directly of Marjorie, and could not. His intimacy with, and his emotions towards, Eleanor had suffered some mysterious eclipse under the brilliance of this new sensation. However vivacious his talk might be with her, an attempted caress, a tender or solicitous inquiry from her, would silence him at once. She, of course, saw and felt it, but contentedly waited. This proverbially was the result of love.

About a week after his return from London, Yordas saw in the windows of a book-shop two folio volumes of which his father had often spoken, marked ten pounds. He stopped to look, then entered. In an impulsive moment he had parted with two bank-notes and was carrying off the volumes, having declined to have them sent after him. It was almost the first use he had found for a practice upon which his mother insisted, that of carrying money about him. When he got home and was looking at his purchase, it just crossed his mind that he had been assisted to make it by his mother's absence, she having gone that morning to spend Sunday with one or other of her acquaintance. The idea grew, and in turning the pages he found yet one more aspect of his freedom. He could not fancy *her* looking at it with him, but

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his father—the very smell of the book seemed a breath from the parsonage. Very soon he carefully packed up the volumes and wrote a direction on the paper outside. Although it was still raining, he put on a waterproof and set off to the station.

But he did not go immediately to the parcel office. He walked about, looking at the trains and passengers. He saw a finger-board pointing to the *South Express*; lingered by some luggage labelled for Berwick and for Newcastle; and heard inquiries made about the train for Alnwick. Insensibly his mind played with the names and their suggestions. Scenes and associations swarmed about him. He felt lonely and thought of Marjorie, but he was in the hills with her, not in these bustling surroundings. Then the weight of the parcel reminded him, and he strode towards the office.

Just as he reached it he turned away again. . . . Why should he not take the parcel to his father? To-morrow, Sunday. He could walk in at dinner-time, he could tell them all.

As the *South Express* smoothly started its journey, Yordas was in it with his parcel at his side.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### PEAT SMOKE

AFTER recent rains the mountains loomed spectral through the grey shroud which enveloped everything. The air was mild, and groups of gnats were abroad. On grass and twig hung beads of moisture, and as Yordas shook some down from the bough of a mountain ash he dallied with the thought that these were his mother's tears. At this atmosphere she still shuddered, and it had once driven her from such a love and hearth as his father had to give. . . . He did not understand it.

The subject clung to him like the mist, for it was in such odd contrast to his own feeling at the time. He was singularly calm. He just dropped into the Harthope valley at the same measured, even majestic, pace as the heron which sailed over the shoulder of Passpeth before him to alight by the ruddy waters of the burn below. No impetuous emotion now urged him, like that of a schoolboy scampering home. It is true his soul was aglow, but it was with the still and steady heat of a gleed from which the unruly vapours have escaped. At the bridge where the two burns joined he smelt peat smoke. So far from discomposing him, as he stood quietly to inhale the incense, his repose was simply deepened and confirmed. It surprised even himself. Never had he approached his father's house in such a condition

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since the days when he was a boy. Nay, never in his life until this moment.

All was in complete silence about the parsonage. Not until a finger was on the door did even the dog become aware of an approach. Then the animal growled, and the voices at the table ceased. Yordas entered, and met what seemed a host of upturned faces centred in himself. But the effect was so ludicrous that he broke into a laugh, and with that the spell seemed broken. All who had been arrested in their several attitudes of partaking food were at once released, and joined in the laugh. As the intruder closed the door there was a burst of welcome.

Mr. Brant was at the moment dispensing bread, and with one hand upon the loaf, whilst the other held out a slice to Gideon Thew upon the knife, his eyes had fallen upon Yordas. When, like the rest, he was liberated, he walked round to give his son a hand-clasp. But he did not speak. The clergyman removed the parcel and the cloak, and then made a place at his own end of the table. All the rest was full. A chair he had to fetch from his study.

After the momentary surprise there seemed a singular absence of restraint. This particularly struck the parson. The tranquillity which Yordas felt was written in his face, and it at once communicated itself to those about him. Martha frankly pondered the parable of the prodigal son without actually speaking about it.

By the time they rose from the table, everybody was in a state of supreme astonishment, including the clergyman. A whole overclouded tract of life had as it were been blotted from their memories. They were dazed and puzzled. This was not the Yordas that now for years they had contemplated, but one they had once dreamed of and so long since lost. The

world was no longer the same at all. With this extraordinary topic of conversation the hour which had to elapse before the church service became a brief one. Mr. Brant and his son retired to the study for the interval. Baillie withdrew to her room. But in the church everybody again assembled. Some additional measure of devotion and solemnity seemed to have lighted upon the little company. The responses were rendered with animation; psalm and hymn sung with wondrous vigour. The parson had prepared a sermon on St. John vi. 44; but on going into the pulpit he changed it extemporaneously to one on "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law."

"It was a grand deliverance yon," was what Abram called it to Gideon as they came out, and the latter had bluntly agreed.

Not the sermon only, but the whole service, fell upon Yordas like rays of sunlight from his earliest years.

At the same time, as he sat there in the hearing of his father's words, although he listened his mind pursued a current of its own. The love, joy, and peace upon which the clergyman dwelt so fervently formed as it were the accompaniment to which the meditations of Yordas sang a song of their own. He was aware of more than love, joy, and peace in the abstract; he had more than balm for himself to draw from their fruit.

But when he came out he wandered up the burn alone. A breeze was rising, and the overclouded sky was higher and had assumed some form. Such a grey sky had numberless associations for him, but the only ones he was now engaged with related to his mother. It was she and she alone that here possessed him. In this renewed radiance of home

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she presented an altered appearance. The tenderness for her which he knew he had been losing revived again, but with mysterious additions. There was pity; there was fear on her account, not his own. He retraced his steps more quickly; and as tea was not quite ready he went into the study with his parcel, to which as yet no reference had been made.

"This is extravagant, father," said he to the parson, who was alone, "but I have brought it to celebrate my return home." Mr. Brant started. "Not that I am coming to live here," went on Yordas, with a smile, "but you know what I mean. After tea I will explain myself more fully. You are glad to possess it?"

Silently his father had untied the string (he never cut any), and from one of the volumes before him he looked up.

"For the way in which it comes;" and without trusting himself to say more, Mr. Brant folded his son in an embrace.

After tea they were again in the study. The mere silence of the house was to Yordas wonderful. But he felt so completely at one with it.

"Doesn't Baillie sit with you sometimes?" asked he, looking up from the hearthrug at his father poring over the folios.

"Certainly," said Mr. Brant, with what seemed more than his usual abruptness. "Would you like her in now?" he added, though as an afterthought.

"Since I have left home I have always thought of her as a sister," Yordas went on, whilst the other's eyes remained riveted on his book. "She seems part of this home. I should like her to hear our conversation."

With alacrity the parson looked up, and went to fetch Baillie. They returned together, and after



shutting the door Mr. Brant stood with his hands on the girl's shoulders.

"She is part of this home, Yordas," he said whilst standing so. "Since I lost you as a pupil, my boy, she has been the only one, and an apt one she has proved herself."

Baillie went through the ordeal with heroic composure, and they ranged themselves round the fire for their talk.

The boyish glee of Yordas still possessed him. Perhaps he made the most of it, as if conscious that the removal of all difficulty lay with him. But of the slightest affectation or insincerity he was not guilty. He did in fact feel free, by virtue of this long-sought ability to be frank in his father's house. This made him plain and natural, and both his companions felt it. There had been a momentary pause when Yordas broke into a laugh.

"I purposely told you only a part of my triumph, father," said he. "The greater part I reserved to disclose to you here—at home. Ay, at home once more. I sniffed the peat up the path yonder, and I felt instantly that I was coming home. Neither of you can really imagine what it means to me. I feel a regular prodigal. But never mind. Here I am at last, clothed, and, I trust, in my right mind. You, father, will I expect guess what I am at," he went on, with his eyes on the fire. "I have come to prove those words that you once uttered on a snowy night under the moon: 'Human love is a divine and glorious thing.' Medal and all academical rewards are paltry indeed to that."

Mr. Brant interposed a quiet remark of approval, and Yordas went on.

He broke into a plain straightforward narration of the birth and growth of his passion for Marjorie, and the return with which it had at last met. He



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showed how all his successes were due to it, how under it all his life was transformed. This day's one infallible test was enough. By that alone might it be judged. With any other result he might have doubted; but that it could make him a child again, that it could extinguish all that estrangement from home, and bring him here without one shadow on his spirit was enough.

"Don't you think so, Baillie?"

"Certainly," was the emphatic reply; Yordas hearing as he thought the thrill of joy in the young woman's expression.

If these two received his story without that ecstasy which marked the telling of it, there was nothing to hint at any want of sympathy in their more subdued pleasure. The parson indeed gave full expression to his deep emotion, added a few pious fragments to his admirable sermon of a few hours ago, and did everything to confirm his son's position. Indeed, it might have seemed sometimes from the fervour of his utterance that he was strengthening in that way convictions in himself which required support. Baillie naturally spoke little, but her face was beautiful in its calm, and in that slight increase of colour which her nearness to the fire had caused. Yordas often looked at her as he spoke and always with an accession of eloquence. He had never really felt before what an essential part of his home Baillie formed.

When, at a favourable opportunity, his father withdrew to settle the cow for the night, Yordas even laid his hand upon one of Baillie's in playful affection.

"And you, dear girl," said he, "have you nothing also to tell me in return? No more reserves, you know."

Baillie looked at him and laughed.

"Nothing so interesting," she said lightly. "Oh, yes, you shall know. . . . Does your mother approve of it?"

If Baillie used this merely as a parry, she could have done nothing more effectual. It certainly was noticeable that in his narrative Yordas had never mentioned Eleanor.

"I have not told her yet," replied the youth reflectively, at the same time withdrawing his hand. "Do you know, Baillie, I can't make my mother out. She is full of contradictions. Sometimes she seems made of noble affection, at others utterly heartless. You are a woman, tell me. What do you think the chief quality of womanhood? Is it self-sacrifice, or asserting your own inclinations with utter disregard of consequences to others?"

"It is hardly fair to ask me. I suppose if we pretend to be Christians it is not a matter of manhood or womanhood only. Ought not everybody to try and practise self-sacrifice?"

"I suppose they ought," returned Yordas, in a tone showing that this was not the first time he had thought of it. "But there is a difference between man and woman, selfish though it will sound to you. A man simply has to mould a life for himself, but if a woman of her own will engrafts herself on to that life, isn't it her highest excellence to subdue her whole soul to that life and try by her own extinction to promote it?"

"Men think so," laughed Baillie.

"And all the best women that ever existed," exclaimed the youth. "In no other way can the world grow." But hearing Mr. Brant coming they changed the topic.

When he got to bed that night—to the plain hard bed of his boyhood—Yordas felt that his visit was a supreme success. The frank egoism of a lover

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judged the fitness of things by the serenity of his own spirit, and in spite of that passing reference to his mother, as well as his own thought of her by the burn earlier in the day. Before he fell to sleep the two blended into one vein of contemplation. Yes, it was still pity with which he now thought of her. That spell which she had so long cast over him was finally broken, and he could see her as a separate human being, not an inscrutable divinity merely. Adoration was transferred to Marjorie. His mother was capable of mistakes. From this pallet-bed she seemed very remote from him. She was the lonely one now, and not his father. The bit of indignation he had felt at the discovery of the money matters was gone, and he hated to think of her out in the world alone. But he dropped to sleep at last and dreamed that he was rescuing his mother from drowning in the linn; but, when he got her out, it was Baillie—and, horror, she was dead! He woke up in a perspiration. It was still dark, but he could not sleep again.

Monday was a day of drenching rain, so Yordas spent another equally happy day at the parsonage. After dark he watched the moon break up the clouds, in company with his father, and they foretold a fine day. If so Yordas said he must set off.

"Why didn't your mother come?" asked Mr. Brant.

"She was visiting. She knows nothing of the expedition." And the subject dropped.

In the autumn sunshine the parson put his son well upon his way.

## CHAPTER XXV

### EXTREMES

AND so Yordas got back to the town. With a resolute step he walked from the station to his rooms, and, as he had foreseen, there sat his mother, pretending to read, but plainly enough only waiting for him. His radiant independence gave her a blow.

"Here you are, mother. Enjoyed your visit?"

They did not kiss. Eleanor dropped her book.

"What is this, Yordas? I have endured the change as long as possible, knowing the cause, but must I become a complete stranger to you? Am I to lose you too? You have been home?"

Yordas knelt at her knee.

"Do not be so cruel, mother. How can you be a stranger to me? Yes, I have been home. The desire came on me suddenly. I couldn't let you know. I went to tell father that I was in love."

"Before even confessing it to me!"

"You knew it," laughed he, as she laid her hand on his head. "And not only that. I believe you have wished it. Marjorie returns my love. This, mother, must end all our differences. Father and Baillie are delighted. I had such a glorious visit there. Just like the old days." And sitting with an arm stretched across her lap he told her all about it, as it had all appeared to him. His father had asked for her, and

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he himself had explained it. They could both go there now with every certainty of mutual kindness and understanding.

There was a smile on Eleanor's face, which may have been from joy at the renewed harmony of life. So Yordas certainly construed it, and he went on with animation from the depths of his own spiritual simplicity. All the world was so clear to him now. It was impossible but that his mother should be convinced. Those two lives, apparently so inconsistent, could and should be blended. How else could he marry Marjorie? Was she of his mother's world exclusively? Would she— But such thoughts were too preposterous, and he threw all doubt from his mind.

"Then are you really engaged to Marjorie? Does the doctor know?"

"Certainly. I obtained his permission before even presuming to love. I suppose we are engaged," he laughed. "She has confessed pretty plainly that she accepts my homage and returns my affection. Naturally, there is nothing more yet to be done. It has established my life, and I see my course clear before me. Do you know, mother, I believe I can do *anything*, as you once foretold for me. You shall not have to complain of my lack of ambition. I will end as President of the whole college of physicians, never fear. . . . Marriage? Why, of course we have settled nothing yet about that. But the doctor is evidently satisfied with the prospects of my career, and he has given broad hints of his intention of watching over my interests. Sir James Dunbar has spoken to him about me. We shall decide about the hospital first."

Thus in eager, confident talk did they regain the old intimate footing and Eleanor's fears about this late fit of truancy were dispelled. There was only one point that lingered with her. She was uneasy at



the degree of boyish simplicity that formed part of him still.

"Yes, my boy, you will achieve all that I ever foretold for you. Of only one thing beware. You know that I would not advocate insincerity or dissimulation, but you really must remember that you are now a man. Even your friend Wordsworth proclaims that 'Life requires an art.' Think of this. Childish impulse must not now have all its own way. Mature dignity has to be acquired. Nor is it the easiest of one's acquirements. Cultivate assiduously all your best social opportunities and keep your eyes keenly open. Remember that Marjorie already is almost queenly."

"Ah, ah, mother," was the jocular response, as Yordas leapt up. "I'll be dignified enough. I'll take lessons in deportment."

And throughout that winter he resolutely played his part. Nobody enjoyed more than Yordas the social distinction which he seemed so easily to be acquiring. Not in Edinburgh only, but, through his uncle's flat and the prestige attaching to a successful playwright, the wider realm of society in London was opened to him. But what at times astonished even himself was his ability to combine with this brilliant life a steady and affectionate intercourse with the humble quietude of the parsonage at Harthope. He made a point of writing every week there. To his father or to Baillie he wrote indifferently, with equal ease and frankness to either, aware that all letters were their common property.

These letters did indeed form an important feature of their uneventful existence. The recipients, as Yordas supposed, regularly interchanged them, but oddly enough they hardly ever spoke to each other about the contents. It was a wet sullen winter in the hills, and some of the chill mist which clung

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about the mountains seemed at last to have crept into the parsonage. Martha, who was getting elderly, spoke often of rheumatism, and from time to time became even tyrannical to her younger associate, and was habitually very curt even with the elder. Mr. Brant, though showing no change in his ordinary relations, became more and more taciturn at home; but this might have been owing to the fact of his having decided upon making a selection from his sermons with a view to publication, under the title of "Third Thoughts."

From all or some of these causes Baillie's life during those months lost a good deal of its brightness. She could not always throw off a weight of sadness that was continually assailing her, and sometimes she even fell asleep in tears. Sundays she approached with positive fear, and wept on those nights merely with a feeling of relief from the strain that that of all days had brought upon her.

One Sunday, however, it was the last in January, she went to bed without tears, but was unable to sleep. She stared into the darkness for a long time in a listless, hopeless state, and then got out to look at the stars. The days of rain had for some time ceased, and a brief frost had set in. There was no moon. Without aim she set herself to trace the black outline of the hill by marking where the stars ended. The river was full and plunged amongst the stones. For the first time in her life Baillie felt the sound oppressive, monotonous, and sad. It gradually awakened all kinds of thoughts in her, especially those connected with her childhood. Stories of Yordas came back to her. At last that grim one of her namesake a hundred years ago who had been found drowned at the Whitlees Ford. She had now passed that twentieth year which had completed the century, but a similar fate had not overtaken her.

There would at least have been rest in that, if it had. She wandered on to all sorts of connections with the story. How Yordas had likened Gideon Thew to that other suitor, and how he had once said that he too held self-sacrifice to be woman's highest duty. Not that she had ever forgotten it for one moment since he said it, but it came with added force at certain times. To-day it had formed the one absorbing problem she had to solve. How far ought such self-sacrifice to go? He had never hinted at its having been that other Baillie's duty to accept her ferocious lover in spite of her own inclination. What would he say to this later question now?

For weeks, for months, for years Baillie had avoided the question, trusting in a vague, instinctive way that it would be solved for her. At last the day had come on which she must decide it herself, and on which but a few hours ago she seemed to have decided it. She knew what her mother's advice would be. She now knew Mr. Brant's. But what would be that of Yordas? She cast no blame on Gideon Thew. If she had been able to, one half of her difficulty would have vanished. He had kept his word to the letter, and not until to-day had he even distantly hinted at his love. It was just that magnanimous silence that kept it so eloquently before her. It made her feel that perhaps she was wrong.

"Oh, why cannot I love him?" she cried aloud, as her face fell to her hands. The answer came as a silent shudder, and she knew it was because he had always inspired in her a sense of fear. Then her tears flowed freely.

Gideon's endurance had been heroic, but this new-come knowledge of the prosperous love of Yordas had stirred him to the depths. He had gone up to Harthope that Sunday with a fresh resolve. Not knowing this, Baillie had been taken unawares, for

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long confidence had made her careless in her intercourse with him. It was after dinner that the crisis came. The day had continued brilliant, with a "frost too hard to last" as Abram said. Everything was very still under the slanting winter sunlight, and only some bits of tawny cloud sailed in the clear firmament. Unthinkingly Baillie had walked along the burn to indulge her own reflections, leaving the others as usual with books in the house. But she had not gone far before she heard footsteps after her, and saw Gideon Thew approach. A sudden presentiment was enough, and she trembled.

The man approached with unwonted cheerfulness and began by confessing that he had come to break his word.

"Will you let me, Baillie?"

Silence alone gave consent, and the other proceeded.

"I've no secrets to tell you, for all I had to say I told you long ago. I've never changed since yon day, except I've got to love you, dear lass, more and more deeply. Will you remove the condition you set on me? Will you have my love?"

"Gideon, you have been far too good to me. . . . Do spare me this! I cannot have your love. I'm not worth it."

This was so different from the firm refusal Gideon had half expected, that it thrilled him with sudden hope.

"It wouldn't be hard to show you that that's not true," resumed he joyously. "But I'm not exactly a young man, and all the fine things one would say at twenty don't come so readily to me now. But you know what you have done for me, Baillie; and if that doesn't earn a love such as I shouldn't have thought the world had to give, if I had no' felt it, there's nothing that can earn it. You brought back one half of my life to me, lassie; just give me the rest and you



shall find what the love of a man's whole life can do for you."

"Let me think of it," pleaded Baillie, in a strange piteous tone, utterly unlike anything Thew could associate with her. "I can't tell you now."

"Think of it, my lass!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Have you no' thought of it yet?"

"Yes, I have thought of it, but only as unreal and far off. I thought you might change, might get to see how unfit I am for you, and—and forget all about me. Oh, forget me, Gideon! You are all wrong. I am not the kind of woman to make you happy."

Her distress agitated the man so deeply that a moment's silence fell.

"Have you spoken to Mr. Brant about it?" asked Baillie before he could break it; but Gideon did not hear.

"Trust me!" he exclaimed, following his own current of thought. "Only trust me, Baillie, and you'll no' be deceived. I know that we could be happy. Will you give me your decision next week? I don't want to hasten you into what you'd repent, but if you trust me I am sure you never will."

"Yes, I'll tell you next week," replied she, eagerly snatching the respite.

And once more Gideon turned from his endeavour.

They were not far from the parsonage, and Baillie hurried back. She met Martha in the yard, and asked where Mr. Brant was. He'd gone to Battle Brae. This was the cottage of an old man whose infirmities no longer permitted him to attend church. At first Baillie turned to walk in that direction, but then she changed her mind and decided to keep it for the seclusion of the study at night. It was there she came to him.

This was a new condition for Baillie, and the



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parson saw it at once. But it did not surprise him. With his characteristic forethought he at once made the beginning easy for her.

"I have been thinking about it all, Baillie," said he, placing his hand upon her shoulder. "Sit down, my bairn, and we will discuss freely."

"I am to give him his answer next Sunday," faltered the girl.

"Certainly, that is reasonable. We must try to enter into his position as well as our own. His behaviour has been more than human. He must have a character of the highest excellence. Yes, yes, I know that that heightens your difficulty. But don't you think that now every kind of prospect is cut off in other directions, in time, say in six or twelve months, the outlook might alter with regard to Gideon?"

Baillie looked up into his eyes, frightened. The insinuation could not escape her, but never before had he hinted at any association more than brotherly between Yordas and herself. Two tears fell from her lashes, but she did not attempt to speak. Indeed the parson did not give her time, perhaps intentionally. He launched into one of his fireside sermons on the disappointments of the world and the sense of duty as the sole groundwork of any lasting peace in life. If there was a trace of pedantry in his talk it was hidden, even extinguished, by the genuine tenderness that trembled on his tongue. A more experienced listener might have suspected him of enforcing a philosophy which his reason and all his religious instincts knew to be infallible, but which was opposed as strongly as at twenty by the generous impulses of a reckless sentimentality. Baillie did not, of course, suspect this. For her, absolute, unreserved wisdom came always from Mr. Brant's tongue, and it would never occur to her to look for anything

behind it. She listened closely, with eyes lowered, but at a change in his tone, at a sudden outburst of unexpected energy, she looked again at him.

"The loneliness of the world is a profound mystery to me," he had exclaimed. "He that puts his trust in man is doomed to tears and disappointment. You may claim a soul—nay, you may be in God's hands the agent in creating and developing one, persuaded that here is a thing, a possession of my own, in which every thrill of your heart-strings will find a correspondent answer; and yet, day after day are you doomed to see the sacred unity vanishing, melting bit by bit like a handful of snow from your grasp, all the quicker the tighter you hold it. My darling, you are not a child now or I should never put such a vision of the world before you. I do so now because in your present situation I believe it may help you. Whatever melancholy such a conception of life may bring to us, the path of duty it inevitably makes smoother, and I again repeat that in duty alone is the peace of God to be found. Human reason must of course be respected, and our lives ordered with a view to common prudence, but with this concession I believe our happiness lies in as much as possible continuing deaf to mere inclination."

"Then you think I ought to marry Gideon Thew, even if I do not love him?"

Mr. Brant started at the abrupt, firm tone. His whole frame trembled at the contest it aroused. But he conquered, and in a calm, kind voice he said, "Baillie, I do;" instantly adding, "it is far better for women to marry than to face life alone."

This was the interview that now haunted Baillie in the starlight. For a time it seemed to have brought her conviction, but in solitude and the dark it had lost so much of its weight. Could even Mr. Brant be

right in banishing human love from the world about her? Had not both Yordas and he announced it to be a divine and glorious thing?

"Oh, why cannot I love him?" she sobbed unrestrainedly as she stumbled through the darkness back to bed. There she lay in a state of terror watching for the winter morning.

But in the course of the week which had been allowed her, Baillie regained composure and put her trust in Mr. Brant. She had to admit to herself that when she could cling to this hard sense of duty a serenity possessed her which no indulgence of her own longings could procure.

As Abram had foretold, the frost broke up by Wednesday, and had been followed by a day or two of snow which was now melting. Gideon trudged up the dale through it, making black wet dints in the surface which for the greater part had not been trodden. His footsteps were the only sound but that of the water, except when they were answered by the disconsolate growl of a grouse. On turning the corner the clang of Mr. Brant's one bell was added.

Baillie was in her place as usual, as Gideon knew by instinct, for he had not ventured to look that way. Then, afterwards, the usual group crossed over in conversation to the parsonage for their homely meal. Only three were aware of what hung upon that day, although a fourth, Martha, shrewdly suspected and, through the medium of acute rheumatism, audibly resented it. The talk was never sanctimonious, the parson's only law being that no word should be spoken about prices or the commercial aspect of flocks. It went on to-day as usual, Mr. Brant taking a prominent part, and Gideon and Baillie rather less than usual in it. Then after grace they broke up.



Nothing had been prearranged. So, without saying anything, Mr. Brant took Gideon by the arm into the study. They had a short talk there together, and the parson withdrew to send Baillie in his place. He himself went off through the snow to Battle Brae as usual. As the young woman shut the door after her Gideon got up. She went forward and placed both her hands in those which he held forward. She was rather pale, but looked very beautiful, as her lover recognised with a quiver of the heart. Without a word he folded his arms about her and held her to his breast in a long silent embrace, his deep breathing making a warm place on her neck. At last Baillie felt that his lips were placed there, and with a thrill of thankfulness she found that they did not pierce her with that terror which in imagination she had expected. When Gideon moved his face, and still in silent emotion held up Baillie's to gaze into, she smiled, and then his tongue was freed and he whispered his passionate thanks and devotion into her ear. They spent the afternoon in the study, and when Mr. Brant returned he was in unusual spirits for recent months, talked of the wonderful aspects of the sky and the snowy hills, and with playful raillery made Baillie pour out the tea.

Before they parted for the night the parson snatched a secret word with Baillie.

"Yes," she answered. "The worst is over. I feel quite happy."

Perhaps it was the removal of the prolonged nervous strain which the harassing uncertainty of her life had created that affected Baillie afterwards. Although her mind and spirits kept up their healthier tone, in the following week she caught a severe cold which threatened even serious illness. She could not throw off her feverish ailment after the ordinary symptoms had gone, and the abrupt change in her

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appearance struck those who had never seen her in anything but the most robust and radiant health. Martha, who never minced matters, spoke plainly of judgments as she administered gruel, for of course the interesting engagement was now publicly announced.

After several repetitions of the kind, Baillie one day asked her playfully what she meant by judgments. Martha's eye happened to rest on the letter from Yordas which had arrived that day.

"You'll find out one day," was the reply. "I know that you all think me a croaking corbie, but I know what's t' will o' God as well as any of you, and I can see a bit better when you all go agen' it. Ay, lass, you may laugh, but if it were my last word I'd speak it, and tell you plain that you'll never thrive in t' road that you're taking, any more than Mr. Brant will in his. . . . But it's all yon woman. I telled 'em, and you'll see yet."

"What do you mean, Martha?" said Baillie, clutching her hand with sudden gravity.

"She took him away from you. Was it ever right for a woman to wed where she canna love?" retorted Martha, who had been a young wife once though early a widow. "It wasn't t' way wi' huz anyway. You ken that you canna love him, and that you never can love him, for anybody could see wi' their eyes shut that you love the boy and have loved him ever sin' you were childer, and you'd have married him if yon woman hadna come upsetting everything about her."

Then a strange thing happened, and such as had never been witnessed in the parsonage before. Baillie, ill though she was, burst into a violent temper. She threw to the floor the basin which her attendant had placed so carefully on the counterpane, and at the same moment broke into a torrent of uncon-



trollable indignation, at which Martha stood back in a condition of mingled amazement at the extraordinary incident and concern for the broken crockery and soiled carpet at her feet.

"And mind, Martha," concluded the young woman, flushed with anger, "if you ever dare to repeat such lies to me, or to hint to anybody at what you have just supposed, I'll—I'll drown myself at the ford. Remember, I will, I will!"

Nobody but the two implicated knew anything of this occurrence. It chanced to be the next day that Baillie was well enough to leave her bed but, as has been said, her illness clung about her. There was no outward change, however, in her serene habit of mind, and Mr. Brant continued to approve of the course he had had to take.

The following week the letter from Yordas was a brief and unusual one, addressed to his father. This is it—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—I want particularly to come at once to Harthope with mother and Marjorie. Do not put yourself about, for you know that I can sleep in the stable. I beg you to make no kind of preparation. Do not let Baillie go away on any account. Here it is frightful chaos. Midnight mirk for forty-eight hours. Deepest love to you all.—Ever  
your Y."

"Will you stay?" said Mr. Brant to Baillie as he handed her the letter.

"Certainly," was her reply, in a tone of exceptional determination.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### TEST

THAT letter had come from London, Yordas having been there for a few days. His mother had not told him why she insisted so strongly on his accompanying her, beyond the fact that it was "an important occasion," and as she admitted that Marjorie and her father were going also, the young man did not take the trouble to press her further. They both had gone, and of course taken up their quarters with Mr. Arncliffe.

As soon as he got there, Yordas learnt that the occasion was the production of an important new play of his uncle's, which they were all to attend in state. The young man was not exactly in his highest condition, for the morning of leaving he had received the periodical letter from his father, which seemed to Yordas written in a dispirited vein, and in which was incidentally mentioned the fact of Baillie's having been far from well. The sense of this hung about him, and made him less expansive than he had been of late. As if to counteract his humour, Eleanor was in the brightest spirits, and supposing it the foggy atmosphere of the town that was affecting Yordas, as it generally did, she even ventured on jocular comparisons. But for to-morrow, *the* day, she promised brilliant conditions.

In this they were disappointed. That day on which they were to go to the theatre proved one of the worst of a London winter. There was a funereal fog all the morning, which Yordas had tried to ignore by reading under a brilliant light; but, in the afternoon, stealthy, sepulchral, malignant noises whispered at the window-pane, which betokened the commencement of some kind of abysmal snow or hail. This made Yordas uneasy, and after lunch he moved about restlessly. Bertram was absent. Eleanor soon returned defeated.

"This approaches obliteration in the hills," said she gaily, seeing his pensive condition.

"Obliteration in the hills!" cried he. "Nobody ever suffered such damnation in the [hills. What day there can approach this?"

"Those grey south-easters that with alternate sob and shriek and groan thrash off the last leaves night and day about Martinmas," Eleanor replied firmly, with her eyes on him.

"Those!" exclaimed Yordas in derision. "They do sob; they do shriek; they do groan—yes, they do thrash, trying even to level the heather in their rage. They can rave royally and extinguish utterly. But it's regal to this, not devilish; it's at least a frown, not infernal blindness. Do not"—

"Those grey impenetrable blankets, then," laughed she, "that shroud the universe from pole to pole and quench the spirits to one sodden level with the black peat-bogs."

He too laughed as he looked at her. "Don't blaspheme, mother. They at least are grey. But never mind."

They entered into conversation, and the youth threw off some of the depression that had haunted him. Eleanor wished for the night to come. Come

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it did at length, and after some real difficulties they reached the theatre.

"This is better," said Eleanor, pressing her son's arm as they entered their place of honour. She tried to exchange a look of intelligence with him, for a thrill of pride possessed her at his appearance, but he merely nodded. Once seated, he reclined with his knees crossed and arms folded, in an attitude that resisted all his mother's efforts at conversation. Presently Dr. Burnside and his daughter came in to them, escorted by Mr. Arncliffe, and then Yordas arose and all his countenance altered. Nor did he again relapse into silence until the play began.

Nothing had been said to Yordas about the subject of the play. Indeed, from what he had taken to be the evasion of his inquiries, and a general air of jocose mystery in his mother and uncle, the youth had got the impression that some kind of good-humoured surprise was in store for him, such as a child is apt to sniff a few days before its birthday. The title was *Rue and Rosemary*. In the matter of titles Mr. Arncliffe frankly admitted to his friends that he was working the Shakespeare flora just then, and in reference to his present one he frequently quoted with witty allusion to the prospects of his play—

"These keep  
Seeming and savour all the winter long;  
Grace and remembrance be to you both."

Under these circumstances Yordas had felt some natural curiosity in the thing, and this seemed to increase as the play progressed. Secretly his mother's eyes dwelt a good deal on him, but for a long time she confessed it difficult to construe his face. She had felt this difficulty increasing of late, and to-day seemed to have added some fresh perplexities of its



own. For several years now nearly everything in regard to her son, and her own relationship with him, had developed so favourably that the lady had confidently forecast the future upon consistent lines. The natural irritation caused by the transference of virtually a lover's homage to another from herself had been conquered by a strong exercise of reason, and she was firmly training herself to the prospect of an intellectual or æsthetic companionship with him. As a matter of fact, this play had been accepted by her as an important trump card in her game, and from this cause sprang most of her present alertness. It might have affected her unfavourably if she had known that Yordas had divined all this before the end of the first act.

One thing very early in the piece was plain to Eleanor, namely, that the humour of it was eluding her son. Through the peals of laughter that from time to time infected the multitude about him, Yordas sat without a smile. His mother even suspected that he chose those particular times for pinching his features to a scowl, and he then too plainly reminded her of his father. She grew uneasy. All her efforts to communicate with him by stealth were frustrated. The merest stranger could see he was not pleased. His eyes frigidly refused to respond. Pinches and pressure were disregarded. To downright words she got a "H'm." So it went on to the end of the second act. He had talked a little to Marjorie. At this point he whispered to her, "It is the grossest sacrilege."

"What is?" she asked aloud. "They are not making fun of the Church."

"That is meant for my father," he replied in a tone equally audible to all, and which none could misinterpret.



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"Oh, is it?" said she.

But all of them were looking at Yordas. Mr. Arncliffe just then came in to them.

"What's up?" he asked.

Eleanor withdrew for a few words with him. Dr. Burnside adroitly took Yordas in hand.

The principal source of the humour was one not new to the stage. It lay in the eccentricities of a parson incongruously married. But the writer's ambition evidently soared above the realm of common farce. Some genuine differences of temperament were sought to be displayed, and the development had a human significance. To Yordas a very deep one, for it was not long ere he discovered that his own family circumstances had obviously supplied the motive of the plot. There was the retrograde country parson of ludicrous puritanic excesses, the highly cultured emancipated wife, the brilliant son, girl-graduates, milkmaids, and unsophisticated shepherds' daughters enough, all of course intermingled to the properly romantic, and more or less immoral, degree such as Mr. Arncliffe knew his public to require. All the humour was naturally at the parson's expense, or through preposterous situations of his contriving: sweetness, polite ambitions, and light, as naturally fell to those in more rational agreement with the order of the universe. But the irony and the tendency of events was most kindly, and it seemed as if the joint effect of the higher forces was ultimately to illuminate even the poor parson, and bring him to such eminence of preferment as his scholastic abilities deserved.

But despite the general efforts, the third act proceeded under a great measure of constraint, so far, that is, as related to a small section of the house. Yordas had been openly rude to his mother, had curtly declined his uncle's pressure to go with him

to the back, and had once risen abruptly as if about to leave. But he remained to the end.

A great supper had been arranged by Mr. Arncliffe in celebration of his fresh bow to the world, but he had to explain that his nephew's sudden indisposition unfortunately prevented his being there. This excited no remark, for of course the peculiar significance of the playwright's theme was not known beyond his own immediate friends. The success of the piece was assured, and in this all minor personal topics were buried.

Dr. Burnside agreed candidly with Yordas that the choice of so delicate a subject was a mistake. He did not pretend to be in the run of literary or artistic aspirations, but it seemed to him that the sanctities of private life should be preserved.

"Preserved and promoted," assented Bertram. "But may not idiocies be assailed wherever you meet them? Should the worldly accident of relationship exclude one from the use of a valuable theme? What is every literary product but the presentation of somebody's conceivable conditions—the sanctities of somebody's private life? A play, doctor, is like a sermon. If there is any truth in it, surely somebody in the audience will feel hit."

"But Yordas seems hit by the untruth of it."

Mr. Arncliffe shrugged his shoulders with a smile, and muttered, "*De gustibus*"—

Yordas thought of going to an hotel for the night, so incensed was he; but ultimately he drove to his uncle's under such conditions as the dense fog allowed. After lying back for some time in a chair he jumped up and seized a pen and notepaper. He wrote a short letter to his father, and went out to post it. Afterwards he went to bed.

He met his mother in the morning before his uncle was astir.

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"What is the meaning of this, my boy? You cannot surely misunderstand us?"

"No, mother, I cannot. Your meaning is too direct. This is the world to which your key of gold is to open us? It is not one that I care about. Evidently nothing whatever is sacred to it—not even my father's whole life of solitude and piety. I could not have conceived this possible. But we won't now discuss it."

"We must now discuss it. Do you think I can rest for one day or for one instant under such an imputation? How was your father's life of solitude and piety assailed?" she asked more lightly.

"That you can put such a question proves that no word of mine could give you an answer. I am going this morning to see the doctor and Marjorie, to obtain their consent to a visit of the latter immediately to Harthope with you and me. They, at least, shall be disillusioned. You will not refuse to accompany us? I wrote last night to say we were all coming."

Eleanor raised her eyebrows in astonishment. But she consented to go.

The doctor received Yordas most kindly, but also expressed astonishment at his request. However, he said that Marjorie was old enough to settle her own affairs, and that if she felt inclined to face the expedition he was himself quite agreeable. They were to have returned to Edinburgh that day, but there was nothing worse than the elements to hinder his daughter's journeying by the uplands of the border whilst he took the more direct and expeditious route. They could travel as far as Newcastle together. When proposed to her, the adventure offered attractions to Marjorie, and the details were quickly arranged. Yordas left to prepare.

He found his mother and uncle in conversation,

but his countenance showed that he came in readiness for anything.

"My dear fellow," began Bertram, removing his cigar, "will you calmly discuss this grievance? I have proof of your enlightenment, and I am perfectly sure that a few words will show you your mistake."

"My mistake!" returned Yordas. "Such a matter of elementary human feeling admits of no possibility of mistake or discussion, it is decided on instinct, immediately and infallibly. Difference of opinion simply argues difference of moral and intellectual structure. Discussion will only make me angry. . . . Marjorie will go, mother. I want to start by the half-past one train, can you be ready?"

"Certainly, my boy."

And Yordas passed to his bedroom to pack his bag.

Mr. Arncliffe's risibility was with difficulty kept down, so tickled was he by the predicament into which his sister had been drawn. Eleanor felt no inclination to laugh. They talked a little, then she also withdrew to make preparations. In due time the travellers drove off.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE TWO FORCES

LIKE all sensitive people, Yordas was especially sensitive to ridicule. Perhaps this was the chief ground of his anger now. But not at all on his own account. To say truth, he had scarcely noticed the travesty which passed for a representation of himself, so engrossed was he by the recognition of these indignities heaped upon his father, whom he loved so much better than himself. Presumably Mr. Arncliffe's humour was not good, for, in spite of his moral temperament, Yordas was certainly not deficient in humour. Had the humour of the thing been legitimately good, we may suppose that Yordas would have laughed as at the parody of any other worthy creation. We know that he did not laugh. Nor was he mature enough to treat the whole thing with philosophic contempt, as Dr. Burnside had suggested.

Never had such a vein of indignation swelled up in him; no, not on the discovery of his mother's accepting that share of his father's stipend on what to the youth seemed such false pretences. Eleanor continued within the range of his indignation equally with her brother and the applauding crowd, for it was well known to Yordas that his mother had been repeatedly consulted as the composition of the play proceeded, and that her conduct throughout proved



fully her approbation of the theme. Her attitude in the theatre was indeed sufficient. His own bitter word was "Shameless." Therefore the young man felt to have drawn his sword against the world. But to whatever that might ultimately lead him, all his care now was to disabuse the mind of Marjorie. This alone was the purpose of his journey. Nor could any assurance of Miss Burnside, that she took the whole thing as a joke, dissuade him from his object. In fact, he once told her pretty plainly that if she had any regard for him she would by no means treat it so lightly.

They reached their last station, and had to pass the night at an hotel. Out here was neither fog nor rain, but an angry wind came howling from the mountains, driving grey clouds constantly to the sea. The first sniff of it invigorated Yordas, but by no means assuaged his wrath. He lay awake the greater part of the night, listening to the familiar roar and indulging the old thoughts which it inevitably aroused in him. Since he was a boy he had always loved a night wind. It was still blowing in the morning, and when Eleanor came noiselessly into the coffee-room to breakfast she surprised Yordas at the window watching the clouds.

If the lady had hitherto to a great extent misinterpreted her son, she was by no means deficient in intelligence, and she fully understood the gravity of their present position. So she had deliberately assumed a part. Therefore she came up and kissed Yordas good-morning, an ordeal from which he shrank. Eleanor did not display any excess of familiarity or affection, but in her manner she stoically asserted that there was no change. As she had entered the room and seen him standing there, the thought oppressively seized her that with the slightest betrayal of weakness on her part he could

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turn in his anger and rend her as if their relationship had never been. To this extent had she discerned that his methods would differ essentially from his father's. Something of herself was inherent in his composition. So be it.

"My dear boy, must we carry this through?" she asked carelessly after they had exchanged references to the landscape.

He looked at her with a glance of angry astonishment, and said bluntly, "Of course we must carry it through. It is no practical joke with me, I can assure you."

Eleanor, too, sat down to breakfast in anger.

It has been said before that triumph was a necessary ingredient of Mrs. Brant's existence. Without the sense of it she at once became pitifully helpless, and the victim of all sorts of hysterical impulses. She had never forgotten that once in her life she had collapsed thus. Willingly she did not mean to do so again. During breakfast she recognised that the part she had adopted would not be enough for her son. She had once or twice proved that she could physically vanquish her husband. She would physically vanquish her son also. For his good, for his deliverance—nay, for his sane existence merely—he should be vanquished. So she set herself to a computation of his forces and of her own.

Eleanor rose from the table defiant and self-confident. She had picked up his glove.

Marjorie talked gaily of the country, and drew Yordas into enthusiastic rhapsodies on Harthope and the whole borderland so intricately interwoven with his actual and imaginative life. Eleanor secretly exchanged amused glances with Marjorie, just to keep the boy's absurdity in the right light. The wind continued high, and as they drove in their

covered vehicle in the teeth of it they got from the windows glimpses of the higher hills, snow-covered, about whose summits the grey clouds hung. But as they all looked alike, and seemed wholly without picturesqueness or grandeur, Marjorie privately felt the land drear and savage. She was, however, greatly entertained by her lover's ceaseless flow of romantic gossip, and this beguiled the way.

There was the hush of expectation in the parsonage. The few indispensable preparations had all been made the day before, and even Martha had almost exhausted her critical resources. One thing, however, she had forgotten, and this she hastened to repair.

"I suppose yon piano'll be set going," she was remarking aloud as she opened the great round oven door to attend to the leg of mutton. "From ten in t' morning when she comes from her bed till long after honest folks— What's to do now?" she asked curtly of Baillie, who came hurrying in.

"They're coming."

"Well, let 'em come. They'll get more than they deserve, I reckon, if"—

"Martha!" said Mr. Brant gravely, holding a finger up, and passed through. He went down to the little front gate and stood without a hat. It was a little after one, and the wind had at last riven the overclouded sky and was tossing the low grey rack rapidly to the sea. Spaces of blue appeared, and glistening cloud fringes. A whole dark block clung to the great hill behind, and from its edge the sun threw upwards a span of rays which illuminated the streaks and ribs of white upper cloudlets to a dazzling purity. Beneath this Mr. Brant waited.

Yordas held himself in well-bred restraint. As the carriage drew up he waved his hand merely to



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the solitary figure, and then turned his glowing eyes to Marjorie as though to say "There!"

All Marjorie saw was a plain, clerically clad man whose hair was turning grey, and whose rugged bearded face showed an expression of calm dignified welcome. But she greeted him very prettily. A silent hand-clasp received Yordas and Eleanor, and after a simple invitation to the driver to remain and have dinner the parson ushered his visitors to the house.

"Yes, my boy, show him what to do with the horses. You will find corn and hay." And Yordas ran off.

Not having thought of this, Baillie had withdrawn to the back to escape the first meeting, so the young man came unexpectedly on her there. At the first glance he scarcely recognised her, so changed was her face by illness. The start, too, which she gave at his sudden appearance seemed to him one of horror for an instant, but then as she smiled he thought what an idiot he was. He saw it all in a moment, and laughed.

"You came here to escape us? We are such a formidable crew." But looking again at her face his tone altered. "Father told me you had been ill, but I was not prepared for this."

"Oh, you only startled me," was her light reply. "I am better now. . . . There is Mr. Brant calling me." And she was off.

Although the commencement was in every way satisfactory, this first glimpse of Baillie haunted Yordas with an odd effect. As she sat at the table by the side of Marjorie the merely physical contrast dismayed him. To one of his sensibility there was something intolerably pathetic in the appearance Baillie offered. It made him ashamed of his own and the others' insolent health, and he half forgot in

this the prime purpose of his journey. But soon the two impressions became one.

That the young man was preoccupied surprised nobody; indeed all felt his conduct to be a remarkable success. Eleanor saw in his reserve the glimmer of returning reason, and it enabled her to feel more at ease. She recalled the beneficial effect of former visits to Harthope, and her better nature could not resist a thrill of gladness at the idea of the contest which she had foreseen at breakfast being possibly escaped. The behaviour of Marjorie was in all points calculated to soothe everybody. She charmed Mr. Brant immediately, and, as if from some other hemisphere, Baillie heard the parson in active conversation upon topics she could never have suspected him to know anything about.

When Yordas rose from the table he found the indignation against his mother not only confirmed, but deepened, if that could be. The brief contemplation of his father, as far as he was capable, from the outside, had joined reason with emotion in that fervent acceptance of his character as something absolute and beyond dispute. He eagerly sought Marjorie to interchange a few words before starting for the walk they had planned with his father.

"That's their world; this is ours. Is it so contemptible in comparison?"

"Really, Yordas, I don't understand you. Surely the world is not so rigorously divided. I have found Mr. Brant a glorious man, as I knew I should. . . . All that was a joke, but, I agree with my father, a most improper one. I do think, though, that you have taken it too seriously."

"No, no, it was not a joke, not even an improper one. But supposing it a joke in my uncle, what was it in my mother? She deliberately approved of it as a test of my progress in polite culture. I am convinced



of it. She thinks my allegiance to my father too implicit. Is improper a strong enough word for that? . . . But here comes father." And the parson came to go with them up the water. Eleanor was too much fatigued to join them.

She sat by the study fire with a book, but not reading. It was a long time since Eleanor had so sat there, and her mind naturally found a good deal suggested by the interval. At the age she had now reached, and with the ambitions she had so consistently fed on, the mere tenderness and sensibility of life seemed something youthful and remote. This drift of thought soon brought the frank admission that love for her husband was extinguished. She saw that he could no longer inspire even the semblance of tenderness in her. She smiled in recalling that weakness which penury and defeat had awakened. But it was gone. Triumph had at last brought the full sun of life to her, and she was determined to bask to her heart's content in the radiance. But in passing to Yordas the colour of her meditation was altered. She herself knew that all her faculties of devotion were centred in Yordas, that he was still a real power in her life. Her very anger of defiance against his present absurdity was fanned to its white heat by her fervour of devotion. She knew that she could not here say, "Then go your own way and no longer cumber the ground that I stand on." Life without Yordas she could not yet contemplate. And only by conquest he was to be retained. So Eleanor continued to ponder her resources.

That night, as Martha had foreseen, there was music in the parsonage, all the visitors being assembled in the little parlour. Baillie too was there, as it seemed in enjoyment of the unusual gaiety. Marjorie had displayed a kindly attraction to the pastoral maiden, and in their unconstrained intercourse, which he

eagerly noticed, Yordas found much of his good-humour return. The expression on Baillie's face which had so affected him had now vanished, and he could see in her the playmate of his imagination. This wrought a corresponding change in him which his vigilant mother did not fail to note also. She tried in little ways to avail herself of it, but without success. So she resolved on a bold expedient.

In drawing the blind Eleanor had noticed the moon. She remembered former scenes under the moon, and this emboldened her. At a favourable moment, as she turned from the piano, she fixed her eyes on Yordas.

"Yordas, my boy, come and look at the moon."

He commanded himself supremely, and said, "Yes, mother."

Proudly Eleanor drew the hood of her cloak over her head, and stepped out into the white sea of light that flooded the valley. With equal confidence her son was following, for it was not anger but resolution that now sustained him. When abreast, she put her arm through his, and they reached the road by the burn-side without speaking. One topic was inevitably in both their minds, but Yordas began it.

"Do you remember telling me my fortune under the moon?"

"That is what I was going to ask you. Was it not true?"

"Evidently not in the sense that you intended."

"Momentary anger I can understand as well as anybody, Yordas. But is not that wild injustice out of your mind still?"

"I have harboured no injustice. As I told you before we left London, our difference is instinctive; that it can arise shows that we are differently constituted. Let us simply recognise it and keep it in mind in future."

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"How? In what way? What do you mean?" she exclaimed quickly.

"That our paths are apart. That the key of gold you promised me shall never open for me the world you inhabit."

Eleanor was stunned, so promptly had all her calculations been demolished. But she quickly recovered. A contest it was to be then, after all. But how well he had caught the art of dissimulation.

"Do you know what your words mean, dear boy?"

"Perfectly. We had better not discuss them."

"Why?"

"I may say more than will be pleasant."

There was a novel tone of manhood in Yordas which, being just discovered, affected Eleanor more than she could have wished.

"You cannot say more than you have already done."

"Oh, but I can," was his retort.

Eleanor trembled.

"Yordas, my beloved, my beautiful boy, you shall not use such language to me," she exclaimed, taking his arm firmly with both her hands. "Only let me plead my cause."

"I would rather you did not, mother. I am older now, remember; I can understand more of the appearances of life. I shall speak my opinion very freely, for I have not the pious charity of my father."

"Child, let me see your face," she said, trembling with anger or emotion. "You are not yourself. Some evil spirit possesses you."

"Not now, but it has done. I am now clothed and in my right mind."

He withstood with immovable composure the close approach of his mother's eyes and lips in the moonlight.



"Is all love for me extinct, darling? Is all that passionate devotion gone utterly that had become the very breath of life to me? Can you possibly?"—

"Might not my father have asked that with far greater reason when you appeared to betray me?" he returned, without flinching. "I did give you a passionate love and devotion in all the simplicity of my heart, and how have you used it? To trade in the most cynical heartlessness upon it. To add wound upon wound to my father. To draw me away from him and all that he wished for me. You abandoned me when a mother's care could have been of some service, left to my father all the trouble of my childhood; but, when there was a prospect of turning to pecuniary account those faculties which my father had by his labour unfolded, you return again to claim them; by every subtlety and"—

But as he grew in vehemence, Eleanor's trembling hand was placed upon his lips, as in a piteous tone of entreaty she muttered, "Spare me, my own son! Do you think I have not had to brave all this in my own bosom before your pitiless steel had planted it there? . . . But you have said enough. Let us return. I too have something to say, but I will find another occasion." She withdrew her hands altogether from him, and in silence they went back to the house.

Martha disregarded entirely the hours of her visitors, and went to bed as usual at nine o'clock. The kitchen clock was striking ten when Yordas regained the parsonage, and, seeing a light at the back there, he thought a few words with the old housekeeper would restore his composure. Eleanor returned at once to the parlour, where she found Mr. Brant and Marjorie still in animated conversation. But instead of Martha, Yordas found Baillie in the kitchen,

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privately making some advance preparations for breakfast the next morning. He looked round inquiringly. Baillie told him that Martha had gone. He said he wanted to ask her how long she would endure them.

"How long can you, Baillie? But we'll go in the morning if you sit up to prepare *us* feasts. I can cook trout and bacon, what more do we want?"

Baillie laughed, and said she thought he would have forgotten how.

"Do let me do that," he exclaimed almost petulantly as she went to lift down a large ham. "You ought to be in bed now."

"But I'm all right again," she said.

"You don't look it. You must have been down-right ill. Father didn't tell me it had been anything of that sort. I don't think he looks very well either. What have you all been up to?" He didn't ask it as a question, and without a pause he went off into talk of old Harthope things and people, in all his old boyish way. And how was Gideon? They didn't stop at the Bridgend, as they came up, but should do so in returning.

Gideon was as usual.

"And—and what do you think of my Marjorie?"

"The kindest and most beautiful young lady I have ever seen," was the prompt reply.

"Isn't she?" said Yordas, laughing. "I can see father has taken to her already."

Now that the reserve on this question was once broken, Yordas proved frank and eloquent enough, and whilst he helped Baillie with several other things he kept up a continuous stream of rapture on the inexhaustible theme. He found peculiar delight in having got Baillie for a listener, as he had had nobody at all before to whom he could confide all the fervour and enthusiasm of his love. The voices of the



others came vaguely to them from the parlour, and, as the fire was not quite out, Yordas seemed to forget his care on the point of his companion's need of repose, and planting her in a chair he drew up another to the hearth and went on with his subject.

Even in common narrative, from boyhood, he had been able to enchain Baillie's attention; so on this topic, prominent in the minds of both, he could not fail to engage her. He revealed so artlessly all the noble stimulus that an exalted love had inspired in a nature primitive as his own, that his listener was carried off perforce to realms which in fancy she had never dared to visit. But she made no effort to resist his power. Her own wings quivered on his highest flights, knowing that she was capable of sharing them, that in her soul too could have arisen just such an ardour as this if she might legitimately have indulged it.

"My father called love a divine and glorious thing," he concluded, "and so it is. It seems impossible to have lived without it. How it has exalted my life, Baillie, you cannot know now, but you shall know. I tried to tell you when I came home some months ago, but the effect is increased a thousandfold since then. It has at last fully revealed to me my father. That alone would be enough. What a man he is! . . . And *he* has had to pass the bulk of his life in solitude. But that way madness lies. They are moving."

He got up almost sportively, so liberated was his soul by its vigorous exercise. He took hold of Baillie's hand in a glow of fraternal tenderness.

"I kissed you once," he said. "Do you remember, when I was first leaving? Now I may do it unflinchingly. Good-night."

But to his consternation his lips got wet with her tears. He saw that her eyes were streaming.

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"It is only weakness," she said firmly. "I am stupid. Good-night."

The door was ajar, and, in turning, Yordas saw Marjorie's good-humoured face also nodding good-night to him.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### TANGLES

FROM whatever cause they arose, Baillie's tears disturbed Yordas a good deal, and kept sleep away from him for a long time. After a restless night he decided to speak to his father about her, and during the morning an opportunity occurred. The visitors had decided to stay one whole day at Harthope and depart on the morrow, and, now that he was talking out of doors to his father, Yordas gave plainly as his reason for resisting persuasion the household's state of health.

"Baillie is the worst, but none of you are well. It would be impossible for us now to stay longer, but I will come back alone. But it is not only health. What is the meaning of it? Baillie seems altered."

"We all alter, my boy. It is the penalty of life. Do you think it is a privilege of your own only?" added the parson with his quiet smile. "Baillie is now a young woman. Her prospects open. She, too, you know, is engaged to be married. I have looked for the opportunity of telling you."

"To Gideon Thew? . . . At last. He has persecuted her for years," exclaimed Yordas in a tone which strangely resembled irritation.

"No, no," responded Mr. Brant. "No man ever behaved with more disinterested magnanimity than

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Gideon Thew. But you speak as if you disapproved of it. You are not surprised?"

"I suppose I am not really. But I am bound to say, father, that I hoped it would be escaped. With all his good qualities Gideon is an odd man. . . . I must get used to it. Our poor little Baillie!"

They did not talk any more about it, but the revelation threw some additional mystery around the young woman. Why had she given him no hint of it the night before? He had asked after Gideon. Why had she wept?

An inexplicable reserve now took hold of Yordas on the subject, and he actually left the next day without having said one word to Baillie about it. He did not intend to do this, but a favourable opportunity never presented itself. He was thinking, though, a good deal of his own immediate return, and he could then have freedom to look into several things. As he intended that residence with his mother should be forthwith severed, changes of various kinds would be introduced into his life, a full discussion of which he meant to have with his father.

But Baillie and Gideon! . . . As he got farther and farther away from the hills the subject took complete possession of him, and singularly intensified the pathetic impression forced upon him by that first glimpse of her on his arrival. He now felt that the discovery to a great extent explained that impression, and, owing to the restlessness it caused in him, after one day in Edinburgh Yordas decided to return at once to Harthope. During that day he had had one more conversation with his mother, and their first real quarrel was the result. Both were angry and resolute. When they parted, each knew that henceforth life was essentially changed.

Yordas approached Harthope this time on foot as in the old days. It was one of those mild

breathing-spots of February which give intimation of approaching spring, grey and solemn. Although the sky was overclouded, the air was clear and buoyant and the clouds high. A rift or two in the zenith gave peeps of the deep blue, but all the rest was blended into a slowly floating mass of dapple grey, showing mountain peaks and ridges distinctly for miles beneath it. Only in deep creases was the snow still lying. But the slopes were lifeless, flat, and without colour. The birds were yet timid, except a company of rooks, which with much joyous clamour were "climbing the air" at a distance. A remote wood-pigeon, too, called, and it was this sound that arrested Yordas. After listening to it two or three times he decided to take Bridgend on his way. But when he got there he found only the assistant at work. Gideon, said the latter with a grin, was up the dale. As the time got near there was a lot to "taa'k about."

"What time?"

"The wedding."

"Oh ay," said Yordas, and went forward on his way.

He walked with heedless swiftness until he came to that bit of the river known as the Whitlees Ford. Here he instinctively stopped, for never in his life had he passed it without giving a thought to that figure of the drowned girl found a hundred years ago. He had long since settled in his mind the very stone against which she must have drifted. He examined it narrowly to-day, watching the peat-coloured water swiftly curling round its rim until he could distinctly trace the bleared outline of a face, just covered by the current, and its streaming tresses of hair. He started from his reverie with a shock, so real was the vision; but when he put in his stick the picture vanished, and he laughed at his own absurdity. But he did not go on. A few yards



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above were some projecting rocks in which he had formerly sat for hours. He withdrew there now to eat some provisions which he had brought in his pocket. After he had finished eating he sat there still.

It was about an hour after his arrival there that he heard footsteps on the road, and looking up he saw without surprise Gideon striding home. But Yordas did not move. He had only to raise his voice to obtain Gideon's attention, but no voice was raised. At the mere sound of the step Yordas had known that he could not approach Gideon now. For fully another hour he sat there, not alarming even the few winter birds that passed him.

Baillie had parted from Gideon at the broken bridge, but she had not at once gone homewards. When her lover was out of sight she had followed slowly the current of the stream, and so she too at length came to the Whitlees Ford. It seemed as if she had set this in her mind as her farthest point. But she had approached over the short green sward that lay between the water and the road, so Yordas had not heard her footsteps. It was only on looking up that he saw her standing there, and so unexpected was the vision that he thought his fancy was again playing him tricks. However, he soon got over that impression, and then he mimicked a curlew's whistle. Baillie looked in astonishment around her to find the venturous bird that had travelled so prematurely from the salt marshes, but she failed. As it was repeated Yordas stepped out.

In spite of his light-hearted greeting the young woman could not altogether suppress the shock which his appearance had caused her. Yordas kept up his playful mood none the less, until he could support it no longer.

"Baillie, I have quarrelled with my mother," said he.

"You shouldn't do that," she replied, with such childlike simplicity that he laughed.

But it ended with a different note, and to the girl's astonishment her companion broke into a fierce denunciation of that mother he had adored, her aims, ambitions, and whole mode of life. He gave her a detailed account of what had led up to his recent impetuous visit to his father. He sketched her the play, the scene in the theatre, and the emotions that the experience had aroused in himself. He wouldn't hear a word that she tried to interpose until he had finished.

"And should I not quarrel with all that?" demanded he in triumph at last.

"All that is not your mother," pleaded Baillie.

"All that and much besides," he returned. "Don't argue with me, Baillie, or I shall go further. Now I can see so much of all that she has done to us that not even Martha's opinion surpasses mine."

"All your success, at anyrate, is due to her."

"Success!" cried Yordas angrily. "What is my success? Is it a success to make hearts bleed that I should have given my life to lighten? Is it a success to have flung my father into irreparable solitude when one only outlet for his passionate and devoted love was at last before him? Yes, irreparable, for now you know, as well as I, that do what I will the gap can never be spanned. What success can remove that from my brain? What success can lift that load from my life if I live and flourish to a hundred? But that, even that, is not the worst."

Baillie trembled during one moment's pause, and then recklessly, breathlessly, said, "What can be worse?"

Yordas looked at her quickly, and the pale, altered aspect of her face went through him.

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"Those cheeks of yours, Baillie," he answered bitterly. "They will for ever haunt me."

"It is merely a passing illness," cried she. "It is wrong to put that down to Mrs. Brant."

"Again I warn you not to argue with me. You know, dear lass, that it is not only that."

There both stopped. Baillie dared not, or physically could not, utter the words that were in her throat; now that he was face to face with such consequences even Yordas shrank back. What was his right to rescue her from Gideon? What could he offer her in his place? Baillie misunderstood his silence, so her agitation was increased. They went on for a long way speechless. When they spoke again it was only about Mr. Brant.

It was evident that the parson this time was uneasy at Yordas' return. His feelings were not much lightened by the complexion his son put on the visit. The latter attributed it mainly to his changed relations with his mother. Of course the theatrical incident he did not mention, but put down the estrangement to more general causes.

"But how will all this affect your career?" asked the father as they talked together in the study.

"That is the main point."

"And your relations with Marjorie?"

"Those not at all," asserted Yordas. "I have made it all plain to her, and she fully understands my attitude."

"But much else is involved, my dear boy. You say that henceforth you will refuse all pecuniary assistance from your uncle or mother. Dr. Burnside is not likely to approve of any long engagement. Even with all the valuable patronage you have obtained, in your profession it must naturally be years before you reach any independent position at all suitable for Miss Burnside to share."

Yordas in reply merely gave instances which he had had from Dr. Burnside of good appointments secured by quite young men.

The parson nodded, saying that no doubt times were changed.

As Yordas had expressed his intention of staying at home some days, nothing conclusive was come to that evening. All felt the sense of constraint, but it was not now the young man's way to sit down under any such repression. All his nature was stirred up from the core, and he was compelled to give it play. He became imperious, and in appearance even wayward. Baillie he watched closely, as he imagined without himself being observed. His first impression was confirmed, and he resolved that the projected marriage must be prevented. With characteristic promptitude he announced his decision to his father, to the profoundest consternation of Mr. Brant. Any such development as this the parson had never for an instant suspected. He as resolutely gave his son his own opinion, and this gave Yordas a pause.

But two days later came Sunday, and with it Gideon to church. The man was radiant, and no longer like the same that Yordas had known formerly. This made it rather difficult for the latter to open the conversation he had resolved on. Evening arrived without his having broached it, so the idea struck him of accompanying Gideon on his way home. It had closed in thick and gloomy, and was soon quite dark. Yordas had told nobody but Martha of his intention of going, so he just stepped after Gideon as the latter was leaving, and called out that he would see him along the road. Mr. Brant received a shock of alarm in hearing the words, but offered no interference. He sat up, though, until his son got back, and it was late.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### ONE NIGHT

GIDEON took the young man's action kindly and set off in the best of moods. He had frequently laughed in triumph at those old anxieties which the intimacy of Yordas with Baillie had caused him, and it was a long time now since even those vanquished ghosts had arisen. Just now he felt such a sense of peace with all the world that he could forget himself and show a friendly interest in the affairs of his companion, getting boldness from the dark.

So they went on and on, and were nearing the Bridgend with all that load of treason unrevealed. When Gideon had once or twice hinted at the distance, Yordas confessed a liking for night walks.

"Ay, I can understand that," was the response. "One never feels alone."

It needed but little persuasion to take Yordas on to the house, to join Gideon at his homely supper.

But in the lamplight they were less talkative. The eyes of Yordas were frequently fixed on that long string of black seaweed that still hung from the wall. Gideon noticed this long before he spoke of it. He had himself gazed at it for hours silently. At last their eyes met.

"You think me a traitor," said Gideon seriously.

"Not exactly that."



But both knew their thoughts were in the same channel, and Yordas felt his chance had come at last.

"You think I ought to have kept true to her grave and not have looked for happiness with another. Confess it, lad. I've whiles thought it myself; but I can convince you."

"I don't think you can, Gideon. I am not surprised you should look for happiness with another; but I will confess that I am surprised at the direction your new choice has taken."

Gideon sat back.

"I am afraid you will wake up when it is too late, like my father had to do," Yordas went on quickly as if to get it said. "My dear Gideon, you cannot possibly be happy with Baillie, because you will find that she cannot possibly be happy with you. I've wanted to tell you this all the way. It's all I came out for to-night to tell you."

"Do you want to start all this on me again," stammered Gideon, "after I've taken nearly ten years to settle it? I've talked it all out with your father, and do you think he doesn't know better than a lad like you can what I ought to do?"

"I certainly don't think he does," asserted Yordas more boldly, for now his tongue was loose he felt strong enough. "He can tell what is right from your side, but he is utterly wrong with regard to Baillie. The very strongest spirit has only a certain power over the body. Baillie will do all she can do. She will sacrifice herself to the last inch of her life without a murmur, but it will take her life to do it. Will you find happiness in knowing that? Will you find happiness, Gideon, in seeing her month by month vanishing away from you until she"—

But Gideon leapt up from his chair in agitation, knocking it over noisily behind him on the stone floor.

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"It's no' true! it's no' true!" he exclaimed vehemently. But, unable to say more, he walked to and fro in mute agony.

Yordas was not unprepared for this, for he had had plenty of experience of Gideon's violence of emotion. He went on again, but in a tone of calmer argument and attempted soothing. It is not likely that the other heard much of it. At last Gideon stopped abruptly by the side of Yordas and clutched his shoulder.

"Have you deceived me, lad?" he vociferated. "Have you dared to deceive me all these years, and to play the scoundrel with two girls at the same time?"

Yordas sat calmly.

"You know me better than that," said he proudly. "I've told you before that Baillie is my sister, and I am only doing for her what I should have done for a real sister born of my own mother. But, as I tell you, it's not only for her that I do it. It's as much for yourself. The tragedy of that," he said, pointing to the seaweed, "would be nothing to what you'll suffer if you marry Baillie."

Gideon fixed wild eyes on his companion, and cried in a singularly pathetic tone, "What would you have me do, man?"

"Put off the wedding and think of it again," was the prompt answer.

The other paused a moment, then clutching a chair-back spoke with rapid utterance.

"Ay, think of it again; that's the tale you all tell me. As if I hadna thought and thought again of it, until I'm like to go mad with thinking. What else should I think of in the darkness and solitude of this house from night till morning? What else'll the silence o' the stars or the sough o' the wind let me think of? Man, if you've had the waves breaking on your heart's desolation through the night watches

you'll ken nicely how to think, I'll promise you. . . . But look here, lad, I'll think no more," he continued in a changed tone, leaning down to fix that same wild gaze on his companion's eyes. "I'll not be driven back to hell again after getting one more glimpse of the gates of heaven. You have got your own happiness, and leave me wi' mine. Baillie has given me her promise, and Mr. Brant is willing to it, so I'll put off my wedding for no man. Yon's all lies you were saying about her dwining. I ken more of her than you do."

The conversation lasted but a short time after that. Yordas made one more effort, but it was checked by Gideon still more resolutely, and they parted. The silence of the starless misty night settled again upon the Bridgend, but the lamplight was not extinguished until morning.

Yordas reached Harthope about eleven o'clock, and his father met him as he entered. For the first time in all his recollection, since the days of merely childish punishment, that voice spoke sternly to him.

"What have you done?" said Mr. Brant.

"I have told Gideon that his wedding is both cruel and wicked," was the young man's equally firm reply.

"The iniquity, Yordas, is on your side. I shall uphold Gideon to the utmost. Do you think I have not more than the tenderness of a father for Baillie, and can you think it possible that I should countenance anything but for her good?"

"My beloved father, I thought I had offered my last scrap of resistance to anything you could ever propose to me, but in this my whole soul compels me to oppose you. Would you complete the downfall of our Baillie's existence that my mother began? She does not love Gideon; she cannot and shall not marry him if any effort of mine can save her. Oh, the horror of it! For my lovely and bright-hearted little Baillie to be condemned to imprisonment with



that gloomy, fanatical man! How you, the soul of all chivalry, from whom I have drawn every tender passion I have got, can not only look on, but actually promote, such a union, I cannot conceive! Do hear me, father, before it is too late! Do you not see the change in Baillie? Is such a change consistent with the smallest chance of life? We shall kill her. Her blood will be not only on my soul but equally on yours. It will never forsake us; it will not give us one moment's peace. Save her, my dear father! Help me to save her!"

Only his overpowering emotion brought the young man's appeal to a close. It could be seen that Mr. Brant was scarcely less agitated than his son. But he was trying to speak, when both were confounded by the sudden entrance of Baillie herself.

She had retired to her room at the ordinary time, but not to rest. All her heart, aflame, was with Gideon and Yordas on their long dark walk. The behaviour of the latter throughout that Sunday had not escaped her, screen and disguise it how he would. The air was overcharged for her, and she knew that electric shocks were at hand. For an hour or two she heard Mr. Brant pacing from chamber to chamber downstairs. She heard that Martha even was moving or turning in her room. But as soon as that footstep had arrived upon the flagstones Baillie had passed swiftly and noiselessly downstairs. Since that, every word of the conversation had thrilled her, until she could endure it no more. When she looked at them both, in comparison she seemed the figure of composure.

"I could not help but hear," she said. "You shall not disagree about me. I insist upon marrying Gideon Thew."

"Baillie, if you love any of us, do not marry him," cried Yordas ardently. "You think I have come

here to cause still more disaster at the last moment, but if I had received a word of warning I should not have left it till now. Far better to have any amount of distress now, than to go on to what is lying in wait for us. Your whole soul tells you that you must not marry him."

"How can I break my promise to him now?" asked she.

"What is an extorted, an unnatural and meaningless promise to the sanctity of your woman's soul? Can you for a moment weigh the two together? Sacrifice yourself how you will, but not to this. Yes, I know with what you will all upbraid me. I can see it now. What I have done I cannot undo, but, in averting the very worst of what I have brought over you, I may yet offer some expiation. For Heaven's sake, Baillie, help me!"

"My dear boy," interposed the parson now, more calmly, "if we could order the world exactly as our limited inclinations direct, life would be a very simple affair; but this is not allowed us. Of the tenderness, worth, and even nobility of Gideon Thew, I have the most ample testimony and the deepest conviction. If Baillie is not conscious of any direct youthful passion for him, she has what is more stable, trust and esteem. Passion is more than deceptive merely. It is no necessary element in truest marriage. Indeed, any marriage"—

"But, father, no rational soul can exist without it," cried Yordas impatiently. "If it asserts itself in any other direction, would it not destroy any marriage contracted on these philosophic grounds? If it has asserted itself in another direction before marriage, can it subject itself to mere trust and esteem without shattering life itself? Dare you say that Baillie is incapable of the passion of love for anybody? Do you suppose that if that passion has



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been or shall be aroused in her it will be a hollow whim merely? Baillie's love would be a lifelong priceless possession to anyone, and her marriage without it be the opening to her own grave."

The parson shook before his son's youthful fervour. Baillie trembled with a sense of renewed life. He was right. All her soul flew in response to his romantic notions. This was the opinion she had longed for. Oh, if she had confided in him before! But a glance into Mr. Brant's face checked her, and she stepped up to him.

"Yordas is right," she said hurriedly. "I could love like he has told you. I once thought that I should, but now that he has said what I wanted to tell you I am content. But he is not right in thinking I am so weak," she proceeded, throwing her eyes across to Yordas with a triumphant smile. "I shall not die. Those words would be enough to live on. I *will* live just to thank *him* for speaking them, and *you* for all that you have done for me. My soul is my own. For the rest, God will help me."

Mr. Brant saw the light and the renewed colour in her face, and could not master his agitation. He tried to speak, but his voice failed. Muttering "God for ever bless and keep you, my dear child," he strode away to his study to recover some composure.

"Have no fear for me, Yordas," Baillie went on. "You have saved me, if not in the way that you intended."

"Not if you still agree to the marriage," said he solemnly, and with unchanged earnestness. "You see that even father is touched. He feels the enormity of it. My sweet Baillie, it is impossible."

"Not now."

"Now more than ever," exclaimed he. "If you

have felt my meaning, the marriage is more than ever impossible. I weep and tremble for Gideon, but not even for his life would I sacrifice yours. Think of all our past years together, Baillie, and all our past talks," he continued, taking her hand ardently. "Love is not the delusion my poor father has been compelled to find it. Life cannot be endured without it, and married life on such terms would be wilful suicide. Oh, how can I convince you! What can I do to save you!"

The young woman did not attempt to release her hand, which his, as with branding irons, was searing. She scarcely heard him distinctly through the thundering of her heart. If she could but expire so, what a simple solution of the world. But there was no easy escape of this kind. Again his pleading tones broke over her, and listlessly she abandoned herself to the irresistible torrent. But suddenly she was aroused. He repeated his question.

"Can you say that you love Gideon Thew?"

This had been from the outset taken for granted. He had never required it of her in words. She shuddered, and Yordas felt the movement. He too trembled for the first time.

"If you do not love him, Baillie, can you say that you love anybody? How did you know that I was right in what I said of you to my father? You must have felt the passion of love I spoke about. When and for whom have you felt it? Tell me, darling. Through this only can I really help you."

"Through nothing can you help me. Yordas, our lives are now apart. Leave me! Let me do what your father has told me to be right to do. You know nothing of my strength now. I am not what I used to be. I can do anything."

"But you shall not do anything. I will give the

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whole of my life to save you. That is all I came here for. You shall not escape me."

"Tempt me no more, Yordas!" she cried in a wild voice, flinging him away and trying to reach the half-open doorway. "I will love Gid"— But Yordas clutched her and seized her by both wrists. She turned like a startled bird.

"Hush! . . . Baillie, you shall not love him."

They both stood with lips apart, the quick breath coming and going, and stared into each other's eyes. Deeper and deeper Yordas looked, as Baillie grew more and more helpless. He instantly knew that he had looked into no woman's eyes in this way.

"You shall not love him. Though I have tried to lose it, your soul shall be mine. You shall love me. Confess, Baillie! I have been blind. Forgive me, darling. I thought I could be your brother. . . . All that has been a dream. Now I am awake."

All vehemence had left both of them. The room was in sudden calm. They did not hear the step coursing the passage. As Mr. Brant pushed the door farther open to come in, he saw his son's arms wrapt around Baillie in a silent embrace, and turning away again he went upstairs to his bedroom.

## CHAPTER XXX

### FAITH

NEITHER Yordas nor Baillie misunderstood the import of that embrace. It was not a fraternal one. If the result of impulsive surrender, still neither felt a single pang of guilt. In the contact the soul of each rushed into union, and knew in its sudden completion the unclouded rapture of repose. Thus they continued long and silently. When Yordas at last moved, he held his companion's face a little away from him with a smile.

"Now, darling, go and sleep," he said, and kissed her. But he himself sat up throughout the night.

After a conference with his father in the morning Yordas returned to Bridgend. Gideon started at his appearance, but at once went with him aside. They seemed to understand each other's features.

"The worst you have thought of me is true," began Yordas. "I am a liar, deceiver, traitor of the basest kind, without ever having had the slightest suspicion of my true character. From you I went directly home last night and sought the love of Baillie. I sought and gained it, for I find, through no fault of her own, her affections have been fixed on me for years. This is the cloud that has been hanging over us and has now burst."

"With all the lightning for me," said Gideon calmly.

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"Not quite all. . . . But I have only come to confess what I have done. Now that I have done so, I cannot make your pain any lighter by talking. All the blame and responsibility is mine. If you ever wish to speak to me again, let me know through my father and I will come to you."

"Ay, I shall want to speak to you, but you're right in saying we canna talk now."

They parted, and Yordas returned at once to Harthope.

Later that same day he was in Edinburgh. He went to the house where he had had the last interview with his mother, but found she was away. He was told that her letters had to be forwarded to Capple Rigg, Norgill, Yorkshire. So he wandered about the streets.

Here on neutral ground, as he oddly enough felt it, he could review what he had done. The same central peace possessed him in spite of the waves of agitation that he knew were curling all around. But from his rock he looked fearlessly abroad and measured the breakers. He got into a vein of coherent and collected meditation, and from it tried to track out a course. His mother—Marjorie—Baillie. He saw how, since that discovery of his mother's letter when he was a boy, all his world had centred in a woman. By her light alone had he steered himself till now. Of practical or intellectual aim, such as he knew any consistent life must be built upon, he had known nothing. It might be true that he had been led through a great portion of the universe, but he now saw that his pathway there had been meteoric and in no sense an orbit. In looking over it it suggested a sense of fierce restlessness and fatigue, so different from the state he had now unexpectedly reached. He imagined that now at last he could see the world soberly and with a proper regard to substantial matters of fact.



If ambition had not entirely left him, it had completely changed its drift. Marjorie, who typified to his mind all his latest aspirations, had become a dream. Beautiful and good he was sure she was, but how he had ever fancied himself in love with her he could not for the world discover. This new aspect of love he had never once associated with her. His devotion to her was little different from that he had felt for his mother. Those past scenes with her which thronged his imagination seemed to have been enacted by him in another character. She was remote. He shrank from her in this passionate clinging to the revealed figure of Baillie. But only in an abstract manner. As he paced to and fro in the neighbourhood of Dr. Burnside's dwelling, it was from no coward fear that he delayed to present himself before the prosperous physician. It betrayed much of the young man's character that he knew no such fear. He did not connect any feeling of shame with his behaviour to Marjorie. That was only towards Gideon Thew. Him, Yordas was aware, he had unintentionally deceived and irreparably injured. . . . At length he rang and was admitted.

In a few minutes the doctor came to him and eyed his visitor curiously. It was their first meeting since the affair at the theatre. That incident had raised the young man in Dr. Burnside's estimation, and the greeting was cordial.

"I've wanted to see you," said the doctor. "Sir James is here on Thursday. Do not fail to attend."

Yordas looked at him with an expression that did not escape the other. Dr. Burnside was impatient.

"Now, come," said he, "we've had enough of these vagaries. Remember Burke's advice to the grave and anxious gentleman, that Bozzy records for us, 'Live pleasant.' I read that when I was a lad like you, and it stuck. It made me what I am."

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Yordas could not help but smile; then he broke into his subject.

The artless seriousness and sincerity of the young man amused the doctor as much as it astonished him. He occasionally interposed the comment, "Morbid," "Morbid again," or "Better," but for the most part he listened to Yordas for half an hour as he would have done to a patient. He betrayed no sign of displeasure, nor any more of impatience, until at a fitting moment he got up. "I had better break all this to her," said he. "Come and see Marjorie at eleven in the morning."

After a few more words Yordas was in the street again, with the impression that in spite of his kindness the doctor was heartily glad at the turn things had taken.

He passed the night at an hotel, and in the morning waited on Marjorie. She received him graciously, and, as it seemed, without restraint. In order to smooth a difficult situation she began by telling him that her father had explained his intentions to her.

"But he cannot have confessed my wild presumption," Yordas returned. "That I could have ventured to mistake mere homage for a personal love will be for ever a mystery to me. A peasant may look at but not claim love of a queen."

"We need not discuss the queenhood; but are you a peasant?" asked Marjorie in a tone which sounded like one of pleasantry.

"Since the revelation in the theatre I have suspected that I am. I am a stranger in the polite world. My small part in it hitherto has been one of imagination merely. My mother began it; you continued it. But the dream is ended. I am awake. All my instincts are for the soil. I must smell the peat; I must live in the wind."

"Certainly. Many, even polite people, like to do

that. I did not know it was the exclusive privilege of peasants."

"I did not mean that it was. I don't pretend that I can tell you what I mean. I only know my life is involved in it. Do not think that I am blind to all the beauty and goodness of you and of your world. It is simply that it's not mine. If I tried to make it so, I should deny and distort my nature. Since I aspired to it I have had no peace. It has been but a fever, a nightmare in my brain. I have been acting something I was not."

"Isn't all life that?" asked Marjorie, with a tinge of subtler feeling than she had betrayed yet. Yordas was checked. But she smiled and escaped him.

"I hope not," said he. "My father, at anyrate, hasn't so taught it me. His is not. Mine shall not be, if effort of my own can save it. Yours is not and can never be. Your father's is not."

"No, we will hope not."

"Then you forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive. You have asked no pledge from me. You have given me none."

"But I have ventured to love you; have dared to show that I hoped one day you would learn to love me also."

In his gross egoism the youth could see nothing of his companion's emotion; as he looked at her queenly features he even fancied her calm and passionless, and was glad. Her movement now shocked him by its want of feeling. She had even smiled and moved her shoulders a little.

"No, Yordas, you have not ventured to love me. Constantly I have tried to persuade myself that you have or might do so, but I never could, and it puzzled me. But since I have been to Harthope, all is plain. You ought to have taken me there before. I could have helped you."

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He glanced inquiry, but Marjorie only coloured slightly because she longed to be angry, to scold, to do anything that a merciless, tyrannical child deserved doing to.

"You have not believed me!" cried he. "You fancy I have played with you, deceived you"—

"No, dear, it is only yourself you have deceived and played with. You could never have loved any woman but Baillie. It is strange, it is dreadful, that you can only just have discovered it. Cling to your discovery."

There was something at that instant in the paleness and the tone of the young lady that touched him. He glanced again quickly at her, and coloured more deeply than she had done at any moment of the interview.

"Oh, Marjorie, what have I done!"

"Nothing," said she promptly. "But what are you going to do?"

"As your father told you, to complete my studies and be a country doctor."

She nodded, knowing that this must end.

"Let me hear you say that you forgive me."

"I repeat that I have nothing to forgive," replied Marjorie. "We have exchanged no pledges."

Yordas had said he was at peace, but just then he trembled.

"I, a penniless student, was hardly likely to have reached that," he said with an unsuccessful smile. "But I have dared to draw inspiration from you. I have dared to achieve what professors call distinction under your guidance. I have dared to indulge"—

"Oh certainly, I forgive you everything that you may feel requires forgiveness," quickly interposed Marjorie. "But I have a condition to ask. You must in like manner forgive your mother. She loves you deeply."



Yordas started, but he answered with sudden composure.

"I have now found that it was also my deep love for her that made me angry. It is not forgiveness that lies between us. I must save her."

A short time afterwards the interview was over.

In spite of her self-command, when she found herself alone Marjorie was bewildered. She went straight to her own room, stood motionless for several minutes, and then sank upon a couch with her face buried in the cushion.

"Oh, Yordas, Yordas, my beautiful boy!" she began, but the rest was smothered in the tears that overwhelmed her.

Yordas had not forgotten his mother. He prowled about till train time thinking of her. In the train he thought of her; as also on his tramp to the hills. When he reached Harthope a letter was put into his hands, directed in her writing. He tore it open and read. It was from Capple Rigg—

"MY DEAR BOY,—Here is the usual remittance. I have not had a moment's rest since I left you. It cannot go on. Will you come and have one more talk with me here?—Ever your affectionate

"MOTHER."

This was all. Yordas thought of setting off again that evening, but was persuaded to stay until the next day. After a few words with his father he left the parson in his study and went into the kitchen, where Martha and Baillie were seated by the fire. The former alone of the inmates of the parsonage had gathered not only new but altogether unruffled life from the recent circumstances. She did not pretend to disguise her satisfaction, just as she had



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with equal freedom administered censure before. As Yordas came in she cast proud triumphant eyes upon him and from him to Baillie. Her constant ejaculation to herself since the departure of Yordas had been "Ay, they're a bonnie pair," and now she once more audibly addressed it to them. In what she considered the sentimental fitness of things, she recked nothing of practical difficulties. But she made no vulgar display of her triumph. She never once said or hinted, didn't I tell you so? Her joy was too real for that.

Baillie was at first nervously wistful. Her father and mother had been that day to the parsonage, and some agitation had been the result. Abram had only ventured timidly to stand by his daughter, but had admitted that this was the result he had always wished. Now, with such supporters as Martha and Yordas, Baillie could get to breathe freely again. The world grew firm about her. In spirit she clung tightly to the hand of Yordas, and under such guidance she cared nothing for the sharpness of the rocks over which she was treading. Even old Martha's eyes grew moist as the young man, leaning towards the peat fire, talked of his new world—new, and yet old enough to remind her of the briar-roses of her own vanished June.

But not until they were left alone did the two younger spirits soar their highest. When the study door opened, the dog pattered across, wagged his tail, and reclined at the feet of Yordas. Slipped footsteps ascended the staircase, a door closed, and that was the last sound. The young man looked at Baillie as they heard it.

"*That* love my mother could fling away," said he. "I cannot understand it. Father says that in this world the soul has to exist alone. Can ours ever be lonely, Baillie?"

She only clutched his hand more tightly, not in fancy this time, but in her own warm palm.

"Never! . . . Oh, my glorious father! My poor mother! I was angry, furious with her," he went on as if in soliloquy. "I did say much to her; I longed to say more. I longed to hurl the poisoned vials of my indignation upon her, to crush her in her shameless arrogance under my feet before raising a hand to help her; but you have cured me, darling. I now long only for peace with all the world. I pity her. I will save her from the hideous life she has sought. She shall be ours. . . . Do you remember gathering the noops? Wasn't she an angel?"

"You have disappointed her."

Yordas laughed.

Yes, I have disappointed her, but I can now see the worth of her disappointment. Upon her hopes, Baillie, I could have built nothing. Upon ours I can build a universe. Do you think that I lower or lessen my world by finding my love in Harthope? Extremes meet, remember. My father's humble life is as real and complete as that of the ablest archbishop. It is only those that flutter aimlessly in the middle that waste and desecrate life. What has my mother ever done to justify her womanhood? What might she not have done as the humble and devoted assistant of my solitary father? . . . But we will save her. We will live to show her her mistake. Now go."

Baillie got up to obey him, but he held her hand, still talking. Presently they sat down again, and it was not until the fire was out that they parted.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### FACT

FOR those two days Gideon was stricken dumb by this new blow that had overtaken him. It was too complete and unexpected to admit of any quick recoil in such a temper as his. He was simply hurled into the dark. Mr. Brant understood this, and did not make any other attempt to approach him.

Thew did not try to work. He forbade his assistant to come to Bridgend, locked up the workshop, and in the grim silence and solitude of his cottage the man simply sat unoccupied watching the skies. They were getting higher and lighter than they had been for some time, though still mainly unbroken, and the first grumbling winds of March began to wander round the hills. One night, as Gideon had gone out to the bridge, he heard some curlews whistling as they flew over in the dark. He continued to listen until they were out of range, and then he returned to the house. But he only locked it up, and with a stick in his hand he set off to walk through the night.

He went eastwards, away from the hills, and in the light of the following morning he was on the sandbanks by the sea. The tide was full, the water smooth, but of a sombre grey-green colour beneath the lowering clouds. Sand swept down in fine ground-currents from each opening in the links to

meet the fringe of the first wave, and it was these that Gideon seemed to watch, it was on them at any-rate that his eyes were fixed. Nobody came, and he sat there hour after hour throughout the day. In the afternoon the sun peeped through from the west, turning the ocean into a wondrous green floor stretching away to that gloomy blue horizon. Thew's brows were lowered at the added light, but he sat on. Towards nightfall the wind rose steadily from the south-west. When it was dark it was howling around Gideon as he made his way to the graveyard. He needed no light in his search. He prowled with all the silence and certainty of a night-moving animal to the corner, leaned down and stroked with his finger-tips from the foot of a mound to the upright headstone. After that, on his knees, he bowed forward, and, letting his forehead rest on the grass, remained there silent and motionless. Some time in the night the wind dropped, and with the first glimmer of dawn Gideon moved away like a felon.

The day broke calm and beautiful, the wind having veered towards the north. Early that morning Mr. Brant had had a long talk with Yordas previous to the latter's setting off to Norgill, and the effects of the conversation clung about the parson. Nothing had been able to break in upon his life like these recent incidents; perhaps chiefly on account of his being attacked by the feeling that they were mainly due to his own mismanagement. But what pressed most heavily upon him was the spectre of Gideon Thew. His soul was rent with an agony of commiseration for that man, and he felt his own part in what followed to be the task of coping with Gideon. Over mere worldly circumstances he had long known he could exercise no control, but where there was scope for spiritual influence Mr. Brant was energetic and boundlessly hopeful. It was in maturing his

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plans that these days were mostly spent, and from a vein of profoundest reflection with regard to them that he had to look up to-day to see the actual figure of Gideon Thew approach. The actual figure he supposed it to be, but the parson felt a shock at its spectral appearance.

For one thing, Gideon was excessively fatigued from his long walk. He stepped forward with a broken gait, in marked contrast to his ordinary strong and erect carriage. His features were haggard, and his eyes though stern and piercing wandered from point to point with a strange uncertainty. He allowed the parson to take his hand and lead him to a chair in the kitchen, but he uttered no word in reply to the greeting he received. He at last aroused a spark of pity in Martha's relentless bosom, and exclaiming, "Why, lad, thah's starved," she instantly set about placing some provisions on her great white table, and then urged him to eat. Mr. Brant left him there to do so.

"Let me see *the lad*," said the visitor, when in the study with the parson.

"He's away to Norgill."

"Norgill—where's Norgill?"

"In Yorkshire, my old home. . . . And I'll tell you what, Gideon, we'll go there together to see him."

"Ay," said Gideon indifferently, as if he hadn't understood the suggestion.

"Will you?"

"Will I what?"

"Go with me to talk to the boy there. The movement will do you good. I can be of more help to you in other surroundings. You have a life to face, Gideon, as I had when I woke like you to the loss of a plighted wife. We ought to understand each other if any two souls might."



"Ay, I'll go with you, Mr. Brant." And, to Martha's consternation, that day the two departed.

Yordas was only a few hours in advance of them, but owing to the arrangement of trains they could not have reached their destination until late at night, whilst Yordas got there early in the afternoon. So the parson broke his journey on the way. The beauty of the day continued. As the young man descended the valley in which lay the little grey village of Norgill, the scene oppressed him by its suggestion of that early life of his father which he had realised so vividly from the record of it preserved for him by Mr. Brant. It lay like a beautiful picture before him, with an ugly rent down the middle obliterating the finest part. With all his soul he longed to restore it. The sanguine buoyancy of youth and of youthful passion even deemed this possible. With his present power he felt irresistible, invincible.

These thoughts caused him to approach Capple Rigg with a beating heart. As he touched the gate he caught sight of the figure of his mother in the garden, and at the same moment she had heard the sound. Although he had sent no word, she was every moment expecting him. She flew towards him and led him into a side path. Without allowing any moment for the intrusion of restraint she wrapt him in her arms as she had done before these days of difference. He too did not recoil, but, as Eleanor immediately perceived, returned the tenderness with instinctive freedom. Then they talked for a long time.

The revelation which Yordas brought smote his mother with greater violence than his anger had done. In the frank confession of what he had done Eleanor saw the immediate collapse of all her ambitions, of everything on which these last vital years had been built. She met it neither with argument nor appeal. It was to this narrative that Yordas kept.

He scarcely mentioned his father; made no hint at the restoration of his picture. All that was to come.

When they went in Mr. Arncliffe was finishing his letters. He behaved with all his accustomed good-humour, not troubling himself about unfortunate people's "convictions," as he always called these moral concerns, and never dreaming of resenting them. He received Yordas as he would have done any other indifferent acquaintance to whom he wished well. The success of his play was established, and it was in for its run. The Harthope idiots had justified their existence whatever new imbecility they were preparing to unfold. If cash were required they had only to apply to him. Nobody in the world would give them a substantial cheque with more substantial satisfaction.

As Yordas lay wakeful in the night, all his aim was to obliterate the past and irradiate the future. Rising to a glorious morning, hopes, nay certainties, rose with him, and at breakfast he asked his mother if she would walk with him to Yordas How. Eleanor was unusually pale, and, as she hesitated to answer, her brother could scarcely repress his smile. Now she's in for it, was his mental comment; but he politely remarked that it was a grand morning for a walk, the view would be magnificent, it would do her good. And they talked of which way they should go.

Triumph had been an essential part of Eleanor's constitution. From that alone did she draw her strength. With the rest of the world, she found that to be weak was to be miserable, doing or suffering. And in suffering she always was weak. In fact she had always hugged the conviction that any submission to suffering was in itself a betrayal of weakness. It was this that had taken her colour away since she had parted with Yordas in Edinburgh. It was this that haunted her with the grin of a spectre as she accompanied him this morning in the sun.

The view from the hill was magnificent, as Bertram had foretold. Early in the year though it was, they found a sunny rock sheltered from the wind, whereon they could sit and examine the prospect. Height after height rose around them, intersected by luminous green valleys which simply drank-in the sun. So far they had engaged themselves only with the scene, but both now knew that their inmost hearts demanded utterance. They had been silent, when Yordas looked up into his mother's face.

"I once promised, mother, to gain for you all that your life had been deprived of, thinking it, as you told me, merely a golden key. I want you to release me from that promise."

"I cannot release you," was the reply.

"Then I shall have to break it."

"And break my heart, Yordas, with it."

"If necessary, that also, that I may give you a new one. I am only a boy, you a mature woman and my mother, but in such an undertaking I should find no scruple. Simply because I cannot live without you. I cannot exist upon the solitude which my father holds to be the law of the universe. And you cannot," said he, taking her hand in which was a dead bit of bracken. "The golden key does not bring peace to you."

"This is not a world of peace."

"Not as we have made it, but may it not be so?" said he, pointing to the vale. "Did you not think it so when your horse snapped the gossamer threads that autumn morning and when the mists from all those hills rolled away? The world of peace that was then around you need never have been lost. Others have realised it, so might you."

"You think so because you are dazzled by the light of love. You will find that in other lights it will grow dimmer."

"Can a woman loved by a son and husband tell



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me that?" said Yordas. "Ought she to be able to tell me it? Where is the shrine of love to be found, mother, if not in a breast like yours? Is woman only a dream of man's brain, created for his own deception? It shall be no belief of mine. Since the world was made the world has clung to womanhood, has been preserved and tended by it, solely because womanhood is love."

"And meekness, humility, non-existence, slavery, and other poetical qualities," added Eleanor vehemently.

"Certainly; but call it sacrifice, mother, even submission, if you prefer it. My father's life alone has been enough to teach me that that is the highest quality of a woman. If a woman loves, surely submission is her deepest pleasure, as it is the source of her highest power. She merges herself in the beloved life, and gives to it what it cannot otherwise obtain and what it is hopelessly frustrate without if it fails to obtain it. If this is non-existence and self-sacrifice is it not also the highest imaginable form of self-development? Has any woman the right to say she loves if she is not prepared to do this? You know that my father's life has not only been denied this completing power, but even cruelly robbed of it after being assured here on this spot that he had gained it. No, mother, I am not angry now. I am only agonised by the appalling picture. That I, a mere boy, who hasn't known how to fall in love properly, should have to tell you this, is my greatest perplexity. Look at my father. You, at anyrate, respected and honoured him once—nay, you do in your inmost soul respect and honour him now. Look at him, and think of the sublimity of his sincere and simple life if he had had your love infused into it, even though you had washed dishes and darned stockings for him!"

"Who taught you this, boy?"

"Baillie."

"It is poetry, not life," returned she with a sigh.

"Then our life shall be built on poetry. This, at anyrate, is what your life has been deprived of rather than the golden key. Let me renew my promise and undertake to gain you this. Oh, mother, if I could, should I not be a son to you? All the overclouded past would vanish; the sun brighten all the days that are to come."

"No, I will not hear you," cried Eleanor, starting up. "I should wreck all your lives again. It is impossible. I will roam the world alone."

"But you shall not, mother," said the son, fixing his grip upon her wrist and staring at her. "We have defied each other in anger, but we cannot in love. You shall never rest for me. I will haunt you sleeping and waking. I will bring you to your knees." He felt her tremble.

"What do you demand of me?"

"That you see the glory of the world which you are spurning, and resist the glamour of that which you have craved. You will not wreck our lives but heal them. Nothing is irreparable. A week ago I could not have told you this. It is from Baillie I have learned it, not from you or Marjorie."

"You are a saint, an anchorite, a fanatic," said the mother, fixing a timid but eager gaze upon him whilst he smiled. "Would you convert me?"

"Certainly I would. I would restore you to yourself," said Yordas more calmly than before. "It was my father I used to pity, but now all my pity is for you. It is you that are alone, mother. It is you that have no home. Your life is but the skeleton of a life. You have torn off with your own nails the flesh of husband and child that glorified your womanhood, and tried to wrap yourself in what? . . .



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Art, culture, enlightenment? . . . Do not think it! No, in a spectral garb of the flimsiest purple and fine linen, that is about as near the imaginative life you covet as my uncle's dramas are to Shakespeare's plays. If you had gained anything real or substantial"—

A movement of his mother's checked Yordas, but only for an instant.

"If you had gained anything real," he continued, "it would have been different, but to sacrifice for *this* all those hopes of my father's, all that his completed life would have"—

"Mercy, Yordas! Some pity! The reality was only for you."

"For me! Yes, mother, and see all the ignominy it has brought on me! I have estranged and saddened my father; imperilled Baillie's life; shattered Gideon Thew's; made myself ridiculous to"—

"Hush! . . . Come away from here at anyrate."

"Will you come home, mother? Will you let me gain you all that I promised? Only"—

"You must gain me what you can, Yordas, for I cannot live without you. I was strong enough to throw away the love of a husband, but the loss of a son I cannot sustain. I am defeated."

"Then, mother, the morning has dawned."

Though they rose to go down the mountain they continued to talk, or at least Yordas did, for with him still lay all the enthusiasm. Eleanor as yet scarcely saw the light of morning.

During their absence Mr. Brant and Gideon were approaching Norgill from the opposite side. They too had had profound talk, but as the parson came amidst these scenes fraught with such vital recollections, and never once revisited until now, he became silent. His eyes rested on Yordas How as soon as that point was visible, and for the remainder

of his walk all his thoughts centred in that spot. Gideon, for his part, was hearing waves breaking far away on the north coast.

The first glimpse of Capple Rigg did not affect Mr. Brant as that mountain peak had done. He passed up the familiar road with a firm and even pace and a steady heart, where years ago he had so frequently faltered. It was perhaps impossible for him to escape altogether the comparison of hopes and achievements in this retrospect of over twenty years. But his pious calm remained unbroken. There was that same patch of snowdrops by the gate. The trees and bushes were altered so little. And there stood Bertram Arncliffe, altered least of all. He had just come out on to a gravel terrace skirting the house on the west. Mr. Brant went on towards him, whilst Gideon Thew remained behind.

Gideon had not been in a state of any composure for some days, but not until this moment had the world actually tottered under him. His eyes had followed those of Mr. Brant and settled on the figure of Bertram. He was unable to remove them. He seemed to swoon and to awake to some vision in another state, which at once caused him to tremble with terror. The waves not only broke, but thundered about him. After a short talk the two others approached him, and Mr. Brant was struck with astonishment and alarm at his companion's condition. He addressed him as Gideon, and Mr. Arncliffe started and looked again. The fixed stare of Gideon met his. For an instant Bertram was unnerved, but hurriedly spoke of fetching some brandy.

"What is wrong, Gideon?" repeated the parson. But the other made no reply.

When Arncliffe came out again, Eleanor and Yordas were approaching from the other side.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### LOTS

GIDEON refused the stimulant, but seemed to recover at the more familiar figure of Yordas. He bluntly exclaimed that he had only journeyed here to find him, and drew the young man aside. Mr. Brant glanced anxiously after them, but remained where he was standing. A blackbird was singing somewhere near at hand, and its placid soliloquising note alone filled the silence that all felt.

Yordas accompanied Gideon readily. He pitied the man, but found himself unable to extend to him any spark of real sympathy. If this was the instinctive harshness of success, the young man had fortified such instinct by positive reflection. He had already given vent to these reflections frankly and vehemently at Bridgend and at Harthope, and he had found no reason for any change. Thew's importunate and aggressive love for Baillie seemed to him a crime. In his present impassioned moments he would have accounted it less a crime if Gideon had flung her in the waves.

Preparing himself, if necessary, to reiterate these thoughts, Yordas walked on. The ground sloped to a rugged beck or stream which foamed over rocks from the moor, and which was enclosed in the grounds surrounding Capple Rigg. In approaching this part Gideon at last looked up.

"Who is yon man?" said he.

"Which man?" For the abrupt inquiry was so far away from any beginning of the conversation Yordas had foreseen that he was taken aback.

"The man that lives here, who your father has come to see."

"He is my uncle, Mr. Arncliffe."

"Your uncle, Mr. Arncliffe. . . . He is the man that was drowned."

The words had no meaning for Yordas, but coupling them with the look in Gideon's eyes he simply concluded that the man was mad. So he went on in an uneasy state.

"Ay, he is the man that was drowned," resumed Gideon in a stronger tone. "Or the man that we all thought was drowned. He it was that first brought the clouds of hell into my soul yon days I told you of. He it was that flung my life out on the beach, and strangled it with yon seaweed that's on my wall still. . . . Is he your uncle?"

"You are mistaken, Gideon," answered Yordas calmly. "He could not be the man."

"Ay, I should have thought I was mistaken if I had trusted to my own eyes. But I couldna be when I saw his. I'm changed likely with my beard, and he didn't know me till he heard my name, but that, lad, hit him like a shot. Do you think I could be mistaken after that? He hasn't changed a day. . . . And he's your uncle."

For a moment both were silent.

"Ah, God distributeth sorrows in His anger. He has distributed me nothing else, so His anger must be deep. He's been aye against me. I'm damned."

Yordas began his father's doctrine in opposition to Thew's despair, but he was stopped abruptly by the other's voice. It broke into a paroxysm of anger before which Yordas drew back.

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"I'm damned, but I'll have something to be damned for. If you and your uncle are His instruments for distributing the sorrows of His anger I'll be one for the devil. . . . Oh, man, do you know what you have done to me! If you had told me from the first, and not lied to me, I'd have said nothing. But to come in when all's done, when I have watched and prayed all these years for her, just to come in on the very day and rob me of my life. What am I to call you? What wages am I to give you? Do you think you'll live in joy with my bride whilst I'm again— Haa'd back!"

"I can defend myself," said Yordas, startled by the suddenness of the attack.

"You'll need," was the retort; and in horror the young man realised the desperate nature of his infuriated antagonist's intentions. Wholly unprepared for anything of this kind, Yordas was nailed to the ground in the man's grip, whilst Gideon's extended arm snatched up a larch stake which lay near him.

"Ay, I'll be damned for something," muttered he, raising the great weapon to descend with all his might on the upturned face of Yordas. "The world canna hold two of the same breed"— But the stake was held suspended in a clutch from behind, whilst a wren flung its blithe song into the moment's pause with thrilling distinctness from the twig of a birch tree.

"Gideon!" said Mr. Brant in a voice that rolled like thunder. "Do not blaspheme! Loose the lad!"

With a terrified and horror-stricken stare into the parson's face, Thew leapt up, convulsively throwing his victim from him with such involuntary force that Yordas rolled helplessly down the steep bank into the foaming stream below. A shriek from behind



revealed the presence of Eleanor, as she and Arncliffe ran forward and clambered down to the water. But Mr. Brant did not move his eyes from those of Gideon.

"This is the hand of God and not of the devil," continued he, "and against it you shall not rebel. Come with me!"

The parson placed his hand gently under Gideon's arm and led him away. The man, who but a moment ago seemed lost in frenzy, was powerless, and went trembling like a vanquished hound. On a green space under two trees above a small cascade the parson sat down, and at his bidding Gideon sat beside him. The man's hands were now linked together, and after a period of profound silence the parson spoke.

Yordas lay insensible on the mossy bank below, wrapt in his mother's arms, whilst Mr. Arncliffe had gone for his groom's assistance. After her recent agitation the incident had exercised a powerful effect on Eleanor. The shock of her son's imminent peril had for the moment dispelled those long-gathering fogs of idle and rebellious fancies, and a clear womanly glow of the motherhood that was in her possessed her frame. All the channels of purest affection were suddenly opened, and in artless, spontaneous fragments she gave tender utterance to all her love for this son as if he were still an infant. But perhaps even now she knew that he was heedless, and could so abandon herself the more. When at last the youth's eyes opened, Eleanor's voice ceased and she burst into a flood of tears. It was thus that her brother and his assistant found her when they came to bear Yordas up to the house. The latter had not spoken.

Medical examination proved the young man to have received injury to the head, ugly and dangerous.

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This was clearly the result of the fall, and nothing was said to make it appear other than an accident. The doctor's announcement seemed to astonish Eleanor. She hurried from the room and joined her brother in his library. Bertram was unusually pale, and appeared to have been walking to and fro unoccupied. He look at his sister nervously, irritably, as she came in.

"How kind and tender you are, Bertram!" said Eleanor quickly, with heightened colour, as she returned his glance of anxiety. "I never thought of it. He says it is dangerous, and that the child must be nursed here."

"Yes, of course. Do anything that is necessary. It shall be my affair. I go to town to-day, but keep me informed. Let me know of anything you want."

Eleanor seemed puzzled by her brother's display of sympathy, for she had not supposed him likely to be the subject for sensibility of this sort.

"Have—have the other two come back?" asked Bertram.

"Oh, I meant to tell you that my husband just left a message to say that he will take charge of that ruffian, and see him safely home. He has always had some strong influence over the man. I don't think we need seek any legal aid. Such an outburst was I suppose natural, for he is a gloomy fanatic, and I remember hearing at Harthope that he had lost a bride before in his youth under painful circumstances."

"H'm," said Bertram. "Are they not coming here at all then?" he added curtly.

The negative seemed to affect Mr. Arncliffe favourably, and later that day he left his country place for London.

The doctor proved to be right, and Yordas had a serious illness. Day and night his mother watched

him, and through all the distressing fluctuations of delirium the woman's soul was kept in a constant state of anxiety and dread. Incoherent and inane as the youth's wanderings were to nurse and doctor, to Eleanor their meaning was poignant and profound. The boy was ceaselessly battling in defence of his father against murderous assaults, and yet, from exclamations that escaped him, the scene of his contests seemed to be invariably within the walls of a theatre. Frequently the woman had to escape from the room weeping. But then came the turn, and for some days such attacks were fitful. Yordas would suddenly stop, aroused to the fact that he was rambling, and then with a huge sigh would throw it off. Once or twice at such times he caught the eye of his mother, but neither would speak of the matter. At length followed the conscious convalescence, in the latter days of the wind and sun of March. With this came a marked uneasiness and restraint between mother and son. Yordas was regathering all the threads of his actual life which his illness had so abruptly snapped. The glimpses of hill and sky that he got from his window helped him. But it was just these also that seemed to come in the way of easy intercourse with his mother, and one day he bluntly told her so. They were in the room alone, she standing beside the window.

"Now, if father was here"—but he stopped, vexed at his stupidity. "Has he ever been to see me?" he asked as an abrupt refuge.

"Yes, several times. He is coming again to-morrow."

"Poor old father! I hope it will be such a day as this for him. He always loves those glittering March clouds."

They spoke no more then, but that same day, in the evening, when Eleanor came to read Yordas to

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sleep as usual, each knew that there was something to be said. They tried a chapter of the book, it was *Guy Mannering*, but neither attended. It was given up. Yordas looked at his mother and laughed, but the mirth astonished Eleanor, so far was she from any such humour.

"I have been thinking, mother, of how much you have suffered."

"And it makes you laugh?"

"Yes, it really does at some times."

The lady burst into tears, but Yordas remained placid.

"Only because it is over," added he at a favourable moment.

"Over?"

"Over, mother," he proceeded, taking possession of her hand. "You have only suffered because you have rebelled. You have seen indignity in service, humility, and self-denial. You will now know these to be the only rational law of life, as my father teaches. In knowing this you will find peace, and with peace will come happiness. Ranting platitudes, aren't they? But for those that love, mother, there can be no other creed. We can go home soon now, and you will see."

But Eleanor tore away her hand, and escaped from the room. She only came in for a moment later. Quickly she folded him in her arms, muttered, "Yes, good-night," and was gone again.

Although Yordas lay calmly, it was some time before he got to sleep.

Mr. Brant arrived the next day, according to arrangement. Circumstances never seemed to have any outward effect on the parson, so he looked the same as for all his life he had appeared to Yordas. He brought a letter from Baillie, which the youth thrust under his pillow, saying—

"And Gideon? What has become of him?"

"Oh, he has returned to the shore. I have spoken to Mr. Coulter about him, and he is going to devote his life altogether to local religious work. He can be of much help there on the coast, and it is really what he is best fitted for. . . . I made a terrible mistake."

"You, father?"

The parson said "Yes" in such a way that the matter closed there. After it they talked in a frank and intimate manner as if nothing had ever occurred to break the current of their home existence.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### WHAT'S DONE

IT was of this characteristic in his father that Yordas was thinking as he lay alone after reading Baillie's letter. Mr. Brant's acquiescence in established circumstance might have appeared mere lack of energy to one not familiar with his life and history. His son was unable to explain it so. Explanation, strictly speaking, Yordas did not require, for inherited qualities gave him instinctive understanding of it. Still he liked to ponder it, and compare the outcome with what he could discern of his own faculties.

This acceptance of fact, and swift certainty of vision, in Mr. Brant, had to Eleanor always been the harshest aspect of his piety. To her needs it invariably made him appear hard and inflexible. Therefore it was that she had awaited his arrival at Capple Rigg with so much misgiving and even dread. Self-distrust had again unnerved the woman, through the breach which her own irresistible affections had made in her defiant armour. Even she herself could feel that nobody would give her credit for half the valiant struggle she had made. She could now see upon what her son insisted, the contrast of the two lives in merely moral achievement, but, if she discerned humiliation there, humility demanded a still stricter search.

No, Eleanor felt that she could not again fling herself at her husband's feet. When she had last done so, she was suffering under penury and defeat, and was helped besides by a last generous outburst of passion and youth. Eleanor's youth had gone, she was now something over forty. Not only had something gone; much too was added.

"O man, that from thy fair and shining youth  
Age might but take the things youth needed not!"

So when at last Eleanor had to face her husband, although she was in no degree rebellious or scornful, she was far from submissive or at ease. For years their slight intercourse had been conventional, and always in front of others. Here they were to be alone, and under exceptional and peculiar conditions. Eleanor had managed to be out when her husband arrived. When she came in he was with Yordas. But she did not go up. A little later, hearing his step descend, the lady came out of the room to meet him.

"Here you are!" she said.

"Once more, Eleanor," replied Mr. Brant, taking her hand and just holding it as he accompanied her into the room she had left.

It was the room in which Eleanor used to play to him in her maidenhood, and without a word Mr. Brant said as much in glancing around the apartment. His wife started and coloured. She had hoped all this would be dead in him. The place was furnished differently, but that mountain picture framed by the window was unalterable. The parson's eyes rested on it. Most of his old parish of Norgill was displayed there, and dreamlike memories of a pre-existence, in which most of his present emotions lay rooted, held possession of him. Placid possession, apparently, for his features betrayed no trace of agitation. But his first words were—

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"It moves me still, Eleanor. I thought I was older."

"Is age to free us from emotions?" said she. "Mine become keener."

He shook his head with a smile.

"How little we foresaw of our life when we were last together here. But how much is better than it might have been! Bitterness at least is gone—you can finally pardon me?"

Eleanor winced under this old submissive simplicity. She had hoped for the sterner mood.

"I can bear the boy's anger better than this," she said. "It is juster, nearer the truth of things."

"Eleanor, we must not re-open this. It is far, far behind and long since disposed of. We will have no bandying of responsibility. Whilst we have this quiet moment I am only anxious to know that you forgive me, if possible that you can even feel with me

'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.'

Can you tell me this?"

"I would rather show it you," was the quick reply.

The parson started and looked from the window at her.

"In Yordas we are inseparable, Anthony. Our love that gave us him can never be lost, and can need no forgiveness. He has called me home. May I show you that in him are merged all our differences?"

Mr. Brant was startled as well as surprised. Yordas had not referred to his mother.

"Is this wise?" said the parson. "The most generous intention can hardly sustain a radical alteration of life; and of impulse, Eleanor, we must all beware. I have been glad that circumstances at last allowed you to gain some of that life of which

I, in youthful selfishness, sought to deprive you. Is it prudent to think of altering this?"

Here again was the calm dispassionate attitude that agitated, even irritated, Eleanor. His indignation was far lighter.

"It is not likely that you should trust me," she exclaimed. "To your sincerity all my life has been that of a designing hypocrite. For my own ends I have first wrecked your life, then that of the boy and of all those on whom his depended. Naturally it seems impossible that I can have any power to repair even a fraction of this. But Yordas declares nothing is irreparable, and presumably you have taught him this. Let me try."

"Of course, I would do all in my power to help you. I am only taken unawares. Do not misunderstand me."

"How could I misunderstand a whole lifetime of unspeakable generosity! It is I that am misunderstood."

"If you can possibly find rest with us, come, Eleanor. Not so much is misunderstood as you may imagine. I know that you have not found peace. If I could help you to it, I should feel that the best part of my life was yet to come."

No more was said at that time, and the two returned together to their son's room.

It was with implicit truth that Mr. Brant had expressed his astonishment. Except through definite religious emotion, he knew of no means whereby the disposition could be materially altered, and he had long concluded that his wife was incapable of what he deemed religious zeal. Ecstatic impulse she had betrayed on former occasions, especially at the time of her first humiliating return to Harthope, but that expression had very soon ended as he expected. He saw something different in her now, and thought

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of it. There was no penury to spur her to this sacrifice; no passionate personal appeal now was used. There was evidently devoted love to Yordas, so, therefore, perhaps room for hope. Moreover, the parson knew his own impressions not so infallible as ten years before. . . . Yes, yes; distinctly hope.

During the two days he remained there, no more direct reference was made to the theme. All appeared tacitly to have accepted a certain situation, and a quiet tone of abstract but affectionate familiarity marked their talk. With this new and unexpected atmosphere about him Mr. Brant departed. It put him into no exalted mood. What he had once thought the golden bowl of an earthly life had been so irreparably broken, and his whole detached spiritual attitude so long confirmed, that any change was most probably beyond his power. An originally strong individuality, although susceptible in the highest degree of the needs of common humanity, had apparently by force of circumstances enabled itself to do without them, and by the exclusive development of certain elementary traits had become merged in the vast impersonality that broods upon the face of the waters. From such solemn baptism into the profoundest realms of solitude there is no return. Only the devout soul can sustain it, and only in the weakening of piety does the measure of our horror of it lie.

The day after Mr. Brant got home he took Baillie out with him to bring down the sheep. The young woman noticed the reflective mood in which he had returned, and she expected a talk. There was a fierce north wind blowing, but in the hollow they felt little of the blast that swept across the summits, ruffling the grass, and combing white partings in the wool of any sheep exposed to it. The parson said they would have snow, and in these matters,



at anyrate, he was infallible still. A portion of his glebe close to the house was walled in from the hillside, and to that field his scattered flock was brought when storms necessitated hand-feeding and shelter. Whilst the dog scoured the slope with his ringing bark, Baillie and her companion walked calmly after in more quiet talk.

Nevertheless Mr. Brant's mind was active, even agitated. There was a subtle change in the scenes about him, which means that something had disturbed his own outlook. The north wind, with which he was intimate, if with anything, whistled new tunes; the Harthope water had changed its burden. The parson was in a strange land. This gave a certain indirectness and apparent hesitation to his statements that astonished Baillie. She had looked for results the exact opposite of this. The world was becoming so clear and direct to her. After the religious submission of Gideon to a world of nothing but sacrifice, and his initiation into wholly supernal aims, nothing could have so advanced the young woman's tranquillity as the repair of Mr. Brant's broken life. It was just this that seemed to have come upon them in the only possible way, and yet this pious and beloved man betrayed a wavering that no kind of affliction had ever been able to bring. She listened to him with eager attention, for she was herself now conscious not only of fearless but invincible strength. A new force was in her, and she no longer implicitly trusted Mr. Brant. Even he could err, and she knew that he was now erring in his own case as he had formerly done in hers. She was certain that he knew nothing of womanly love. The conviction distressed her on her benefactor's behalf.

But she had not courage to assert herself all at once. She simply held to her contention that Mrs.

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Brant was right, and that the united life before them all was a wonderful explanation of the agony they had gone through.

Even the parson himself did not say all he wanted to say that morning. The sheep were gathered in anticipation of the snow, and Baillie left him. Then, in an unknown restlessness, Mr. Brant went off alone, and did not get back until it was after dinner-time. He was taciturn through the meal, and shut himself up afterwards in his study. It was not until Sunday that Baillie found an opportunity of opening her mind to him.

In the morning of that day the clergyman preached a sermon which affected the young woman considerably, since she imagined she could interpret it more significantly than most hearers. It was based upon the text Mark i. 35: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." All saw that the preacher was more deeply moved than upon an ordinary occasion, and others as well as Abram Gourlock recalled another sermon preached some years before, when Yordas had once come home unexpectedly. Not that the topic or drift was similar, but an intense personal fervour was common to both. This time Mr. Brant's two points were solitude and prayer, and it was perhaps inevitable that one as intimately acquainted with the parson's mind as Baillie, should see in his remarks more than abstract points.

After supper the two sat in the study. No doubt both were thinking that this was the last Sunday on which they would be thus alone, and there was a peculiar tenderness between them. Baillie, as usual, was on the buffet by the fender when Mr. Brant came in to take the arm-chair. Neither pretended to read.

"You said solitude is a privilege, a gift of God, granted only to a few," said Baillie, looking wistfully up at him.

"What we call solitude, Baillie," smiled the parson. "But that sermon was not for you. Didn't you also note that I connected solitude chiefly with early morning and eventide? Your life is at neither."

"But that does not say the sermon was not for me," declared the girl, colouring a little. "You know what you and Yordas have been to me all my life. I have always felt a child of yours. Can I help thinking of anything that affects you? Love and trust us, Mr. Brant, and you will not feel solitary any longer. It is dreadful for you to *love* solitude."

Baillie started as the parson laughed almost gaily.

"Not at all dreadful, my tender, kind, little maid. Solitude is dreadful only when it arises from hatred of mankind. The solitude I refer to arises from excessive love, if I may be arrogant enough to say so. Besides, you are a fine one to be talking of solitude. I could easily turn the points of suspicion into your own bosom. I could say that you are a confirmed solitary. That you have wrapped yourself up in completest isolation, so that no outside ray of human companionship can possibly reach you. You are impregnable . . . But now off to bed. I must preach no more."

This escape astonished Baillie. She knew that such a tone must not be contested. She rose to go. In bidding Mr. Brant good-night the girl offered to kiss him with childlike simplicity. But the parson paused to gaze absently at her. Then he wrapt her in a warm embrace, muttered a blessing, and off she went.

When alone, the man took from a table-drawer that statement he had written so many years ago for the use of his son, and sat down to read. He

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frequently looked into the fire for some minutes at a time, but he read the sheets through. At the end he had to clear his eyes, and afterwards continued to gaze at the early portrait of himself that the narrative called up. He had not looked at it for a long time. It was not that this and that detail was altered. What he beheld there was no longer himself. The personality presented was unremembered. The atmosphere of Norgill with which the picture was invested influenced and agitated him still; the rest might never have been his.

And yet this Eleanor was coming. In less than a week she would be an inseparable part of his seclusion. In Yordas they were inseparable, she had said. Mr. Brant recognised that they should be, but as regarded himself were they? Was the womanhood of his wife, as a lifetime had displayed it, an inseparable, an undivided portion of himself? Parental love was a reality of quite terrible force to him; but marital? If she had come to him suffering, in tears, even yet— The parson strode to and fro.

Yes, peace, peace. But how? . . . He knew of but one peace, the peace that passeth all understanding. How impart this to Eleanor? Dark though the night was, and windy, Mr. Brant went out and wandered.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE PRIEST'S CLEUGH

IT was on the last day of March that Yordas and his mother travelled to Harthope. No more appropriate time could have been chosen, for in those wintry spring days the hills and streams presented some of their most characteristic features, and such certainly as had played a most important part in the life of the remote parsonage. There had been Mr. Brant's expected snowstorm some days before, but most had melted and the swollen burns had settled into a clear brown. Over the hills swept a surging south-west wind, dimming the sunny blue above with trails of filmy cloud and vapour. As they rode through the various fords in threading the long valley Yordas would fling down the window of the vehicle, and like a child stare at the water splashing round the wheels, or listen to the startled dipper that flew whistling down the stream. On reaching the parsonage he was still in boyish spirits, and seemed to claim charge of all the family. Even Martha submitted to his directions.

In Eleanor there was timidity. Not only for the rest of that day but for many days afterwards she showed something of the restraint of a visitor. This startled and surprised Yordas, for it was so much more marked than on his father's visit to Capple Rigg. He playfully rallied his mother, even ex-



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postulated with her. His father's attitude satisfied him completely. Spring days came on, and the youth's health became once more aggressive. He brought up his plans which had been discussed and approved of during his convalescence at Norgill. It was early in May that he set off.

For the two or three years that were deemed necessary to complete his qualification for his profession Baillie was to continue to make the parsonage her home. This was Mr. Brant's stipulation, which no suggestion or persuasion of his son could remove. For the remodelling of their life Yordas thought his father and mother ought to have been alone, but he could not say so. Nevertheless, as Baillie shared his opinion, it was not difficult for them to form pretty schemes for furthering the pious object they had in view.

Dazzled by the glory of their youthful souls, the lovers knew little of the demand they made. Eleanor herself knew better. Here at home the prospect changed even from what it had appeared at Norgill. With her cleared eyes daily upon Mr. Brant, his life gained in distinctness, and her own humiliation grew keener at the view. Every word of her son, uttered in his most relentless moment, became fire in her brain, consuming all her defences. The parson's life no longer seemed an imaginative picture to be analysed and weighed by this or that fanciful standard. It now stood here bare before her in the rugged simplicity of its moral force. It is doubtful whether she had ever really felt it a thing to be laughed at. She did not now even feel it a thing to be scorned.

For a time Eleanor bore her suffering well, drawing even consolation from it. Baillie reported fully to Yordas, and on his visits home he could see for himself. Although it was not likely that his own

ardour would ever be dimmed, he had, to be sure, heard of the general impression that age affected the tender emotions, and whether the notion were true or no in the abstract, he knew that his poor father had had exceptional strains to endure. After one visit in the autumn Yordas spoke to his mother, and she burst into tears.

"It is too late," she said in the utmost agitation. "I flung it away and it cannot be regained."

"Courage, mother! It will be," said the youth, trembling with tenderness.

"Never! . . . I had no religion then. . . . If I could only have seen the sacred duty"— But her distress stopped her voice, and she allowed her son to support her while he whispered his consolation.

And yet Mr. Brant was striving to bring permanent peace to the life of his wife. Re-marriage he knew to be beyond him. From personal tenderness he recoiled. But he made superhuman efforts to develop intellectual, imaginative, and religious sympathies. The one touch which Eleanor needed to rekindle her soul was, however, denied, and both knew it. But Yordas had spoken boldly this time, and his mother pondered. On the evening of the day he left, she resolved.

Disheartening memories of that dark and stormy night at Norgill parsonage persistently clung to her as she came down the stairs. The study bore the same relative position to the staircase, and there was again a wind outside; but surely, she felt, the difference of her intentions should have counteracted all this. She tapped at the door and entered. Again that strange inviolable calm. Even her husband received her with that same old smile, as if in league to defeat her. She shuddered, and then his face too changed. His mind had flashed back with hers, and she saw it.

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"But it is all so different, my husband," exclaimed Eleanor. "Oh, believe me, it is all gone!"

"I do believe you," said the parson in an unusual voice.

"Then take me back!"

"Have I not done so?"

"Do not mock me, Anthony! You have pardoned me, you have done more than it seemed possible for a man to do, but can you never again love me? Human love you once said was a divine and glorious thing. Must I go to my grave and know that for ever I have robbed you of this? Isn't there still much of life before us? Can I not yet redeem something of the past?"

"You have, you have, Eleanor. . . . But we cannot be young again. It is in the beyond, not here, that we must be one again. . . . Do I not show that I love you tenderly?" he asked in some alarm.

"You do; still there is a whole gulf between us. Can we not here be one once more? Nay, *must* we not if ever we are to be again truly united? Now I know something of what I gave in to. For the first time I can see the real meaning and beauty of sacrifice. Let me make it a reality instead of a belief and a wish only."

Eleanor looked strikingly beautiful in her pleading. The expression of her features, more than tone and words, urged her sincerity on her husband. But his emotion was no recovering of former passion. It was as though a new person pressed her suit on him, and it was this that made his agitation extreme. Unity he felt with his son alone. His soul had attained to heights in which no other earthly tie was needed, or even possible. But his imagination was active still.

"Eleanor"—he began. But his wife, suddenly taking his hand checked him. She looked into his face

with a smile of entreaty, and said, "Well?" The man's frame quivered, a mist came before his eyes and he staggered. As he fell, Eleanor caught him and lowered him gently to the floor.

On coming to himself, Mr. Brant saw that it was Martha beside him.

"Have you ever had it before?" she said.

"Oh yes, Martha; it is nothing."

And so it seemed. The parson sternly refused to be counted an invalid, and things went on as before.

Except that there was still further change in Eleanor. Not by look or sign did she renew her efforts to regain her husband. When Yordas came home he was again startled by the difference he saw. Baillie admitted that she did not fully understand it. Mr. Brant's spirits had as visibly revived as that submissive and watchful anxiety had taken possession of his wife. Complete confidence was not possible even between Eleanor and her son. But between Yordas and his father increased tenderness was visible. It was March, and the two went for all their old walks in the spirits of many a year ago. The rugged cleft known as the Priest's Cleugh was frequently visited, and the parson never wearied of sitting there and talking to "the boy," or listening to all his plans of future work amongst the hills.

After Yordas had gone, it broke into an exceptionally warm and early spring, which continued for some weeks. Mr. Brant was incessantly out of doors, even missing his meals occasionally. Martha was angry with him, but Eleanor did not venture to say anything. For all, the parson had only blessings and smiles. One Thursday, a morning of the utmost purity and brilliance, he spoke at breakfast of taking "a piece" (the shepherd's term for a pocket lunch), and making no haste to get back. He would be ready for tea with Yordas in the evening. Martha

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bluntly contested it, but had to give way, and Mr. Brant set forth. The next day was Good Friday, and he was completing a special sermon. It was a life-long habit of his to do this in solitude and the open air. On this occasion he walked directly to the Priest's Cleugh, and as he ascended the defile the words that ran persistently through his mind were, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." They were not associated with his present reflections except in a general way, but bit by bit the ideas which they recalled, and to which he had endeavoured to give utterance in that sermon he once preached, got the better of the rest. That incarnation, so to speak, of solitude and prayer would always appear to Mr. Brant with the acutest reality, but now he was conscious of a solemn union, even identification, with the figure he had conceived. The suspicion of impiety or arrogance did not now trouble this sense. His spirit did not seem altogether his own; at least, was not at all subject to his human will. He had not long any sensation of will in the matter. A child puts his hand into that of a parent's in the dark, and simply goes. It was thus the parson of Harthope went up into the rocks, and at his usual spot sat down. He laid by his side the paper on which he jotted down his thoughts, but a little puff of wind removed it and he took no trouble to get it again.

Baillie had heard the debate between Martha and the parson, and had also watched the latter go. During her occupations of the morning she could not throw the departing figure from her mind. Yordas was coming to-night. For a long time she had been dissatisfied with herself, troubled with a consciousness of having come short of her duty. She fancied that with her lay the ultimate conquest



of Mr. Brant. She felt quite truly that nobody knew such freedom with him as she did, and it seemed as if she had not exercised that privilege to the extent that circumstances demanded. Yordas was coming. What would she have to say? It was in the middle of the morning that she resolved to make one more attempt. It should be the last, and was planned in a bolder vein than any she had yet ventured.

At the dinner-table Mr. Brant was still absent, and nobody talked. Afterwards Baillie was at liberty to escape. She went up the water, intending to visit the Priest's Cleugh first as the most likely place to find the wanderer. She walked reflectively but animated by the most glowing thoughts. Every footstep awoke some memory of her past life, which went to make her present, and foreshadow her future, one. In a few hours Yordas himself would be leading her up here in the sunset, for it was always his first walk on coming home. . . . She climbed up the defile, and at a point stopped. Then onwards, drawing nearer and nearer. Her heart beat madly. Impossible! But no— Still, why didn't he shout as usual? He did not even move down to meet her. He raised his finger and beckoned her to him with a solemn, spectral sign. Baillie was not superstitious, or she might have suspected herself of being the subject of a new sense. Undoubtedly it was Yordas in the flesh.

"Baillie, can this be true?" said he to her, in such a bewildered tone of agony that for an instant she was paralysed. They both looked downwards at Mr. Brant who was lying there. Then the girl dropped silently to her knees and took her lover's hands into both her own. So they continued for a long time.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### EPITAPH

ONE day in March the following year, as Gideon Thew was wending his way along the coast on a pious errand to a neighbouring village, he found a little boy stretched prone in the sunshine at the top of the cliff called Cushat Stiel. The turf was short and scant there, and the boy lay on a patch almost wholly usurped by a little white flower whose fairy battalions had fearlessly responded to the sun's first call, and now made the soil look as if sprinkled with salt. Not observant of such details as a rule, Gideon noticed the sight for the first time, and approached the place with some curiosity. The lad, whose chin was in his hand, stared out to sea, and was startled by the man's abrupt inquiry, "What have you got there?" Without getting up, the youngster followed Gideon's eyes to the ground and said, "Are they no' bonnie?" Thew lay down beside him to examine them, and they talked in a homely way of their discovery.

It had been a mild winter and was now an early spring. Here the sun smote quite hot from a hazy cloudless sky into which the larks had long since risen from the sandy links all along the shore. Gideon lingered for some time with his young companion in that quiet spot, and their talk wandered from one to another of the things about them. The expanse of sea lay still and very blue before them,

the water scarcely lapping on the reef of rock below, but every now and then bursting into a little quiet splash like a mermaid's laugh. On the flat sand where the rocks ended was a group of seagulls at the water's edge, and even they talked and wrangled quietly as if ashamed to disturb the natural calm of things. Presently another note rose, thrilling and clear, and the boy cried "Hark!" It was repeated two or three times, and then the bird flew swiftly up from the beach and sped above their heads, the boy seeming to watch it breathlessly with lips apart, at which Thew smiled. "Yon's a whaap," said the lad, when he could see it no longer. "Do you ken where they gan'?"

"Ay, they gan' to the hills."

"I'd like weel to follow 'em."

"Well you may," said Thew ardently, "for a good man lives yonder." And scarcely conscious of what he did, Gideon broke into an impassioned description of the green and quiet vales of Harthope which were the curlew's summer home; of the secluded happy life within them; of Mr. Brant, whose spirit for this speaker seemed to animate and even typify that pastoral land. The man became so excited that the boy stared, surprised.

"Ay, I should like awfu' weel to gan' yonder," chimed in he as chorus when Gideon's voice had ceased.

In the silence that followed, both of them rested their eyes on the musselly shelf of rock which slanted into the sea below. There were great tufts of dark seaweed on it, which the water drew backwards and forwards as it rose and fell.

"Is no' that like a woman's hair?" said the boy presently.

But Thew started from his reverie as if he was shot.

"Ay, laddie, it is," he said at last, recovering himself with a sigh; "awfu' like." With which

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words he rose and abruptly departed, leaving the boy to pursue his meditations alone.

Vivid thoughts disturbed Gideon throughout that day, and in troubled sleep at night he was carried away to Bridgend, enacting again there with confused and dreamlike variations his experiences of many years before, when Abram Gourlock's gig was broken and two female visitors were accommodated in his own cottage for the night. It was the ringing notes of Abram's chorus of "John Peel" that seemed actually to awake him. But it was dark, the sound only of the full tide breaking calmly upon the sand outside, and Gideon was unable to sleep again. By the time he got up he had resolved to give that day to following the curlew, from almost as irresistibly instinctive a call as the bird itself.

The wind blew more keenly from the east, but otherwise the day resembled the one before. Out of a blue hazy sky shone the unclouded sun upon grey bare fields and warm dusty roads. All the day the man marched westwards at an even pace, sitting once to partake of food, but stopping for nothing else. The hills, which had marked the horizon at first, drew nearer and nearer, until in the afternoon Thew stood on Bleakhope Edge. He had already traversed upwards of thirty miles. There, just before him, lay the broad winding dale, and, beyond, all the familiar heights shoulder to shoulder. Associations thronged quickly upon him, but of actual faces he met none that he knew, and he did not turn aside to seek any. At the bridge where the Red burn came down into the Harthope water he paused to reflect a moment, perhaps to listen to the whistle of the dipper he had startled, and to look into the clear running stream down which a bit of red bracken was floating. Then on again to the parsonage.

As he passed the graveyard he just cast his eye



over the wall at a tombstone which still leaned forward, and to his astonishment he saw within the enclosure several trespassing sheep. Mr. Brant never permitted this. Still more surprising, in the far wall was a breach through which sheep were at that moment leisurely issuing. The sight aroused Gideon. From it he glanced towards the house. No sound came from it, although from his watch and the sun he knew that Martha must be milking the cow at that moment. He had purposely planned it so. As he drew nearer, the solemn stillness continued unbroken. Even the watchful dog disregarded his footstep. Between the back door and the byre the pilgrim stood bewildered. He pressed upon his stick and drew his hand over his eyebrow. The door was fast closed, and weeds grew on the very threshold. So Gideon went round to the front, and there he realised that the house was empty and deserted. Bare shutters blinded the windows: Mr. Brant's garden was wild. No greater shock could have fallen upon this beholder had he seen the place in flames. He turned away stricken.

But all around Redburnshank was activity enough. The geese with blatant, dissonant clamour heralded the approach of the stranger, and two dogs eagerly snatched up the alarm. A man, whose voice had already resounded, now turned it to the dogs as he looked over the brae for an explanation of the uproar. He continued attentively looking, but not until Thew was but a few yards away did Abram recognise the figure.

"Bless my stars if it's no' Gideon!" he cried, with an astonishment almost as profound as Gideon's own at the parsonage. And with a ferocious grip of the hand he drew his visitor into the presence of Bella. This reception restored to Thew the thread of existence which he had lost.



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As they sat about the fire during the evening, Gideon was first of all put in possession of the few facts that had escaped him during the past twelve months. Abram had frankly to confess the fears that had restrained himself and Yordas from bidding his visitor to the parson's funeral, an explanation which Thew received without remark. Misconstruing the silence, the shepherd was preparing to remove all appearance of unkindness and neglect, when his hearer stopped him short. "No doubt you did right," said he. "But you ought to have told me since."

"Ay, ay, but yen puts things off, ye ken," returned Abram, in his blunt conciliatory tone, and then hurrying on to draw away Thew's reflections. "Man, ye canna tell how we miss him. The countryside is juist another thing entirely altogether without him to gie it a kind o' light. Bless you, the varry birdies and flowers ken it nicely, for I'm tarr'ble sure they dinna haa'd oot sae blithely now that his eye is no' on 'em. They were aa' acquent wi' him, ye ken."

"We shall all be different," assented Gideon gravely. "But why is the parsonage no' 'habited?"

"They tell me they canna get a body to come into it. They're aa' for the toons, and Hartup's a bit off the road, ye ken. And it's no' everybody that can make eighty pound a year gan' as far as Mr. Brant could. My Bella there can equal him, but there's naebody else. They're aa' gaen."

"Do you have no service at all then?" demanded Thew in surprise.

"Ou ay, they whiles come through in the aifternoon when there's a full moon and the weather's fine. They talk o' tacking us on to Shilmerton again, like Mr. Brant says it was langsyne; and we'll aiblins have service yence a month. But it's aa' changed, tarr'ble changed."

And so they talked until it was time for bed. Family arrangements required that Abram and his visitor should sleep together. Before they all separated, Gideon led the worship, and afterwards the two men remained together. As they prepared for rest, Thew looked about him with mock astonishment.

"But where's the whisky?" he asked ironically.

"Man I hae maist dean wi' it. It was fair getting the maistry o' me, and I daurna say where it 'ud ha' led me. At first I whiles wanted it badly, and thought it 'ud never dae, but I cam' through, and now I dinna ken what it is to be drouthy. And you, lad, are you wed yet?"

"Ay, I'm wed."

Abram started up with surprise as he was about to blow out the candle, his features aglow with grotesque amazement in their proximity to the strong light.

"I'm wed to the bride Mr. Brant gave me," continued Gideon, even smiling, "the only one a man like me can want. If you find her, Abram, you find a love passing the love of women. It's a love no mortal can take from you, that no waves can ever drown. If any"—

"Ay, ay," interposed his companion, "tarr'ble like the thing."

So Gourlock blew out the light, and Redburnshank became a part of the mountain silence. But as Gideon lay awake he heard the wind gently moaning, and at dawn it was blowing a keen north-east. This, however, only served to give the air a translucent cleanliness, and when, after their early meal, Thew set off alone for the Priest's Cleugh, he found heaven and earth all a glitter in the rising sun. He first descended to Harthope, and, when he had driven all the sheep from the graveyard, he spent the first couple of hours in repairing the breach in the wall with the stones which had fallen, and strengthened

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any other parts that appeared defective. After this he was a short time in the church, the door of which was unlocked, and the interior unaltered. He then cleared all the weeds from the stones in the back yard of the parsonage, and as he finished this the sun became obscured, and a pelting hailstorm came rattling about his head which sent him to the byre for shelter. When the shower had passed, he pulled up all the weeds from the path and flower borders of the front garden, and then in the brilliant sunlight of midday went on to the Priest's Cleugh.

He kept to the side of the stream, the water toddling in radiant laughter beside him, until he reached the steep tributary cleft down which the water tumbled and foamed. He mounted the rugged track, loose stones falling sometimes from his footsteps and rolling down below, and so gained the point of his pilgrimage. The sun shone full upon the frowning rock, and the small terrace which Gideon knew the parson had frequented, and upon which, from Abram's account, he knew that he had died. Most of the herbage in the crevices consisted of last year's stalks, dead and brown, but the long narrow fronds of the hard fern formed rosettes still brilliant and green, and from these the pilgrim gathered relics. As his eyes rested devoutly upon the little patch of ground, which was now raised for this man to a spot of highest sanctity, he tried to picture every detail of the solemn event with which his mind was filled. The expression of the familiar features stood out clear to him as he gazed for them; the repose and majesty of the figure. But it was alive. The attitude of death he could not invest it with. The eyes were open, and fixed on him in that calm benignity, which he had always seen them wear. He continued looking, and in the fixity of his gaze he saw them alter. A fire seemed to arise in them,



and gradually that glow of awful, imperious, irresistible appeal altogether possessed them which only once in his life had Gideon beheld. He quivered, shuddered, and at last, in an agony of terror, cried in a loud voice for pardon. In an instant those visionary features changed, and the whole figure faded from his sight. Then Gideon saw that the eyes which had possessed such terrible reality for him had turned to a couple of bright yellow flowers which had expanded there in the shelter of the rock, and had unconsciously secured his gaze. They were two blossoms of the small celandine which in their glittering radiance calmly outstared the sun. Thew knelt down and picked them, and placed them with the ferns inside his book.

This vision seemed to compose the man. Presently he took up a bit of stone, and on the grey flat surface of the rock above him began to write. It was a difficult process, but, after much endeavour, as he stood back to regard what he had done, these words were roughly legible: *Here died Parson Brant*. He continued to look at them, and appeared dissatisfied. He felt in his pocket and drew out a strong knife. For some time there was a sound of chipping and scraping, and when he next drew back there was in bold plain print incised upon the rock the word **HERE**. This appeased him, and his face was alight. So he fell to work again.

The sun looked down at him from that brilliant sky, as did also the kestrel which from time to time hovered directly above his head. Probably it was the same bird that had so frequently hovered over Mr. Brant there, and which perhaps alone had seen him die. But Gideon did not observe it. He was too intent upon his work. With his knife as a chisel, and for his hammer a block of stone, he went on letter by letter until once more he drew back. There then stood plain and deep: **HERE DIED**.

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And so he wrought slowly and patiently until the words were finished. Who shall speak of the man's ceaseless and profound reflections during the progress of his work? Life had held mysterious woes for him, to which it appeared no touch but that of Mr. Brant had been able to minister. This alone must have awakened some subtle interdependence of soul which we cannot suppose any mere material parting can have severed. Gideon at anyrate did not feel alone there. The support which he had found in the actual society of Mr. Brant he knew continued to sustain him now. Through the heavy and overclouded atmosphere which gave body to his finite soul the liberated spirit of the parson raised him to a higher plane, imparted to him some bright trail of its own infinity. In communion such as this the man stood for a long time with his arms folded, looking at the blunt epitaph he had wrought, and perhaps thereby investing it also for other eyes with some of the sentiment which he could not express—

### HERE DIED PARSON BRANT.

Gideon did not return to Redburnshank, but when the clouds of pearl and amethyst were gathering beyond the hilltops around the sun he set off for his long walk home. It was after midnight when he came to his own door. The stars were intensely clear over the whole sky, and as he crossed the threshold he paused again to listen to the waves before that snell north wind thundering on the beach. Then he entered and barred the door behind him.



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